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n Russia

TALIA PETROVA

TWICE BORN IN RUSSIA

My Life Before and in the Revolution

By Natalia Petrova

with an introduction by

Dorothy Thompson

AN authentic and autobiographical account of the experiences of a Russian woman during the Revolution.

The author's family is of the old Russian nobility, whose name dates back to the first Czars. She believes, however, as her story is typical of the experiences of thousands of women now living in Russia, that no emphasis should be placed on her identity, and she writes merely as "Natalia, Daughter of Peter."

Briefly and simply, the author tells of her protected, tranquil youth, first surrounded by governesses and her family, and later, in the old-fashioned Catherine Institute of Moscow. She gives an intimate picture of her life in the country after her marriage, and colorful glimpses of the extraordinary relationship of the Russian peasants and their landlords.

All this makes a striking contrast to the chaotic, terrible years of the Revolution which afford the material for most of her story. The author carefully avoids all discussion of politics and events outside of her personal experiences. Calmly objective, this book is a personal record of what Natalia Petrova herself saw and heard. She glides down to terrific depths and slowly recovers to a new plane of existence. Hence the title, *Twice Born in Russia.*

The life of this woman, isolated from friends and family, fighting for herself and for her children in a disintegrating world, is a thrilling record—the very first document of its kind by a woman who went through the Bolshevist Revolution in its entirety.

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TWICE BORN IN RUSSIA

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My Life before and in the Revolution

by

NATALIA PETROVA, pseud.

Translated by Baroness Mary Budberg

Introduction by Dorothy Thompson

1930

NEW YORK

WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY
QUINN & BODEN COMPANY, INC.
RAHWAY, N. J.

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TO

ALL RUSSIAN WOMEN—

MY SISTERS IN DESTINY

INTRODUCTION

A LESS pretentious document than this one has hardly come out of Soviet Russia, the land which has furnished more eye-witness reports, more correspondents' accounts, and a greater number of analyses—more or less expert, more or less documented—than most of the rest of the world put together. The author is anonymous, and in the fullest sense of the word, for she not only withholds her name, but she maintains an intense reserve about all the more intimate phases of her life, commendable in a well-mannered lady, but disappointing to literature.

And yet this thin little book is, in several ways, entirely unique, and it has its unquestionable place amongst the more ponderous

and pretentious contributions to the history of this most terrific and thorough of the world's revolutions.

It is unique, in the first place, as a document. The author is a Russian lady, highly born and early married into a great house—as she tells us by inference, for she is as well bred as a writer as she is as a person. Now, many Russian aristocrats have recorded their experiences of the revolution, and their views concerning it. But in most of these accounts there has been rather more of views than of experiences; most aristocrats who survived to tell the tale did so in exile, and wrote from a revolutionary experience of a few weeks or months. They suffered the boring years in Paris, London, Berlin, or New York, re-couping their estates in the restaurant or antique business, or on the lecture platform. The author of this book endured the revolution as did any petty bourgeoise or out-of-grace social revolutionary. She endured what a demoted class had to suffer on its own ground, and in

addition what was spared to no one, not even to Bolsheviks—the terrible famine. She stayed in Russia, and with several opportunities to escape, for ten revolutionary years, right down until 1928. She lived these years in widely separated districts of the Soviet union. And her record of experience, as a princess continuously in residence, has, as far as I know, no rival whatsoever.

It is unique also for the singular spirit in which it is written, a spirit remarkably devoid of rancour, bitterness, or revenge. It is both an indictment of the pre-revolutionary aristocracy for its blindness, its stupidity, its other worldliness, and its anachronistic methods of educating its own (in this connection I found the early and less dramatic chapters extremely illuminating) and, at the same time, the author herself, by her own qualities, testifies however indirectly to the sort of character engendered by such education, a character the bases of which are courage, disinterestedness, and pride.

The Bolsheviks will not like this book, and yet I cannot see it as in any sense a work of propaganda, hostile or otherwise. Its author has lived her life, before and during the revolution, in an atmosphere pre-eminently domestic; her problems are never those of politics—they are those of a housekeeper and mother. And one feels, reading this modest lady's account of her trials, a great sympathy and admiration for the country which can engage such fidelity. The strength of great Russia, that vast land which diminishes all its governments, its Tsars and its Stalins alike, is in the pages of this book and in the heart of its gentle author.

She looks upon the revolution always with sorrow, sometimes with horror, but mostly with resignation. She does not fret nor whine about her condition, and in whatever state she may be she sees the revolution as something vastly greater than herself. Her own sufferings do not blind her to those of others; she is not tender to the sufferings of aristocrats and

callous to those of other classes. And in the worst moments, when she is freezing in rags, frantic with hunger, and half-demented with the thought of her ill and starving child, a curious optimism remains—not the silly optimism of Mr. Micawber nor the equally silly hope of her own class in exile that they will return to power, but a faith in her country, in its resources, in its people even though they be Bolsheviks.

As for the anonymous author, who withholds her name for reasons of policy not entirely concerned with herself, I gladly vouch for her authenticity. I met her, first, in the winter of 1927-28, in her own home in Moscow. She was already married to a distinguished European, not a Russian national, and the protection of his name and nationality had enabled her to reconstruct in the Russian capital a home with European amenities. Her new life had erased the more obvious records of years of suffering. I met a lady, gracious and grave, gentle, and strong, and I could not

but contrast her, wholly to her advantage, with most Russian aristocrats whom I had met in their diaspora. She seemed to me a lady who had seen and suffered terrible things without losing faith in something much bigger and more important than the fate of her own class. In this sense, the revolution had definitely declassed her. It had admitted her to the society of the gentle and wise.

DOROTHY THOMPSON.

New York, N. Y.,
July 28, 1930.

2113

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION BY DOROTHY THOMPSON	vii
	FOREWORD	xv
1.	AT HOME	1
2.	THE INSTITUTE	18
3.	THE COUNTRY	37
4.	THE REVOLUTION	64
5.	THE CRIMEA	76
6.	FLIGHT	88
7.	THE BOLSHEVISTS	109
8.	FAMINE	136
9.	HOPE	152
10.	THE MISSION	168
11.	MOSCOW AGAIN	186

FOREWORD

EKATERINA KUZMINICHNA was old enough to have been a serf. Having brought up two generations and lived to see a third—she became an inalienable member of our family and worshipped us all.

We called her "Nurse" and so did all of our friends, acquaintances, servants and peasants.

She was small and stoutly built, wore a black silk kerchief tied round her head, was always cheerful and complacent, and humoured all our whims with patience and readiness. To me, especially, she was a priceless companion. After my marriage we lived the year round in the country and often in the autumn months, when I was alone on the estate, I would per-

suade her to come to my room, and would speak to her then of all that troubled or delighted me. There were many things she did not understand, but watching intently the expression of my face and hearkening to the sound of my voice, she laughed when I was happy and wept at any sign of grief.

She was illiterate. Sometimes I made fun of her, profiting by her credulity and her deep conviction in the inviolable truth of the printed word. Holding a newspaper in my hands, I built up improbable stories, pretending to read them from the columns of the paper. She would exclaim aloud, clap her hands in dismay, make the sign of the cross and afterwards repeat to the butler and the maids the curious miracles that happen in our day. If her listeners ventured to express a doubt, she explained reproachfully that "the Princess herself had read about it in the *chroinics*."

Often I, in my turn, was glad to listen to her stories. She had been a "Nicolas' soldier's wife" (the widow of a private of Nicolas I),

was proud of that rank and liked to talk of the old customs, finding them to be far better than those of the present time. She recalled the days of serfdom with real pleasure, probably because they were the days of her youth. She said that then only loafers and ruffians were very poor; that she, herself, had lived with her masters as under the wing of God; that peasants had owned many horses, that each man knew his task, and that people dwelt in health and in the fear of God.

She told of the bevy of peasants that used to be equipped in Spring for catching fish in the Government of Archangel. Each man received a pair of warm gloves, a hat, snowboots, a short fur-coat for the journey and they marched with songs from the Government of Riasan to the far-off north, in order to return in winter along snowy roads, with cartloads of frozen fish.

The heroes of the past generation stood in front of me like the paladins of legends and I admired with all my heart the great patience,

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heroism and strength of mind of the Russian national soul.

The revolution of 1905 left a painful impression upon the old woman. For many years after, she bitterly reproached the peasants for it, assuring them that she would not survive "another indecency" of that sort. And she proved to be right.

In 1918, when disorders broke out in the Government, Nurse remained waiting for us on the estate. Peasants, male and female, came with axes and crow-bars, kerosene and tow, forced themselves into the house, plundered and destroyed everything, and finally pouring kerosene on the old home, set fire to it.

Nurse met them at the door, her arms uplifted, and attempted to reason with the infuriated peasants. But she could do nothing to avert the evil, and, torn with unspeakable emotion, fell down in a dead faint, cursing them. Soon after, she had a stroke of paralysis and died.

And now that the long hard years of which you saw the first convulsions have gone by,

how much I would like to be with you, dear old Nurse! If only I might make you sit at my side as before in a comfortable armchair while I recount all that has befallen me. The image of death somehow does not connect itself with you in my memories.

I see you still bustling about as usual, passing from one room to another with small, hasty strides. The keys of various cupboards and store-rooms, filled with the produce of the farm, jingle in your hands. Or else it is sitting at the samovar, pouring out the tea that I imagine you. Over the silk shawl you wear a coiffe of lace that has slipped a little to the side. Musingly, you drink the seventh cup of your favourite tea out of the saucer. You are buried in memories and one has to call out loudly to you in order to bring you back to reality.

Now I look back more and more to the past, as you did once; and as you, comparing your times with the new preferred the older, so do I turn towards the days you disparaged with sadness and pain.

TWICE BORN IN RUSSIA

2113

1. AT HOME

AS far back as I can remember, mother did not live with us, but with grandfather in Paris. We remained with father in St. Petersburg and I was entirely ruled by Mademoiselle. My brother was in a Naval school, my sister in a boarding institution for girls and I had so completely lost the habit of intercourse with children that playing with them was no pleasure for me. I had a special fondness for dolls. I would carry them into my father's study and play with my numerous family under his writing table. I particularly liked to do so when father sat at his table, working, for his spurs played the part of the door-bell and his legs that of the front door.

Mademoiselle used to read to me several

hours a day and I never missed an opportunity to shed a tear at the slightest hint of sadness or shut my ears tight at particularly gloomy passages. I grew up with an excessively sentimental, lacrymose, compassionate and easily ruffled disposition.

I never worried over mother's absence. I was told that she had left us for a cure. I wrote her short little notes very regularly under Mademoiselle's dictation, and at night before going to sleep kissed her picture. Even then, in my imagination, mother was surrounded by the halo of unapproachable greatness. I was proud of her beauty, the toys she sent me from Paris were the joy of my heart, but I knew that I was not to show them to father, nor ever mention mother to him.

My placid life in the nursery and among my dolls, Mademoiselle and the Bibliothèque Rose, was only interrupted during the holidays, when my sister and brother came home. There were four years' difference between me and my sister, my brother was another two years older.

Boisterous, bold and disobedient, my sister adored all boyish games. On the rare occasions when she condescended to play with me, we built flats for ourselves with the chairs and assumed imaginary names. She was Madame Mukina; I, Madame Pakina. We paid visits to each other, accompanied by our dolls. But our games rarely ended peacefully. Usually my sister was suddenly transformed from Madame Mukina into a surgeon, amputated my dolls' legs or cut open their stomachs, while I cried bitterly.

My brother was fond of soldiers. He had huge cases filled with armies of Russian and foreign regiments. There were fortresses with draw-bridges, battering-rams, barracks and camps and harnessed carriages and trees and complete towns. He must have read "War and Peace," for we always played at the year 1812. I was Prince Bagration, my sister, Barclay de Tolly, my brother acted all the other parts including Emperor Alexander and Napoleon. We put all our hearts into the

game, opened fire, retreated, attacked with the bayonet, carried away the wounded, built hospitals. My Bagration lost his leg in one of these battles, which made me very proud, although it did not enter into the scheme of the game.

I remember one day father came home greatly upset, changed into his gala uniform and left us with the words:

"The Emperor is dead. All is lost."

Silence immediately settled on the house. Everybody spoke in a whisper and my sister, who was at home on sick leave, and I went at once to the nursery. Solemnly facing the picture of Alexander the Third, we sung a requiem to him, representing the priest and the deacon; then, turning to Nicolas II, we broke out into a loud prayer for the prolongation of his days, after which, with a sense of duty performed, we returned to our occupations.

On Sundays we were taken to our grandmother. My heart always faltered at the door-

step of the big grey house which she occupied. I did not enjoy those Sundays, and every time she undressed me in the antechamber Mademoiselle had to persuade me to be cheerful and well-mannered in the presence of Grand'-mère. It was hard to bring oneself into the right sort of mood. The lives of us children were separated from those of our elders by such an abyss that, looking from our shore, the images of even the closest relatives seemed enveloped in a cloud of magic omnipotence. These powerful gods planned everything for us, setting definite limits to all we did, even to our thoughts, and demanded nothing of us but submission and silence. We were to exist only so far as we did not interfere with them. The love for parents and relations, imbued with tremulous respect, was allowed no direct expression of affection, no caress. A caress was a familiarity. Of all the characters taking part in this magic show the most important was grandmother.

Always tightly laced in a black frock, she

wore her white hair very high, frizzed up in little curls, held herself straight as a dart, never paid particular attention to anyone, and when addressing us maintained an austere expression on her face. If she were angry or wished to show disapproval, her right hand tugged nervously at her dress and the rustle of silk served as a warning.

Although no caresses or endearments were bestowed upon us, we could not complain of being severely persecuted for our misdeeds. The greatest punishment consisted in leaving us without dessert or sending us away from the table. We dreaded even the slightest blow to our self-respect and a short rebuke impressed us more than any sermon. We never waited for orders to be explained. They were simply laws. The notions of "can" or "cannot" were deeply rooted in our consciousness and infused in our blood.

The outward forms of education played a supreme part. A discipline that forced one to consider one's environment and a courtesy that

for many of us took the place later on of genuine kindness, were required from the earliest years.

Those famous Sunday family lunches were a kind of weekly test. The table laid for twenty to thirty people was occupied by three generations, headed by grandmother. We, the children, perched on high stools without backs, alternated with governesses of all nationalities. We waited, standing, for grandmamma's appearance. Then we all curtseyed, came up to kiss her hand and the hands of the aunts, and replied in monosyllables to questions:

"Oui, Grand'mère!"

"Merci, ma Tante!"

"Non, mon Oncle!"

After this short ceremony, one of the children said grace and all took their places at the table.

At our end of the table the meal passed in utter silence. We sat, very upright, both hands on the sides of our cover, and ate, in misery,

all that was put on our plates not daring to ask for a second helping of a favourite dish.

Grace was said once more after lunch and once more hands were kissed. Then our elders retired to drink their coffee, while we were dismissed.

The lower floor was occupied exclusively by our cousins and their governesses. An uproarious scuffle began at once! I was the youngest and did not participate in the games of the others. A short hour of freedom came at last when the governesses devoted themselves to gossip over a cup of coffee in the adjoining classroom, forgetting for a while their little trained monkeys. Profiting by this I would scramble upon the window-sill, which was strictly forbidden, and peer with curiosity at the street.

In St. Petersburg, in winter, at this early hour of midday, it is usually dark. The blackness behind the windows with the swaying lights of the lanterns and the crowd of un-

known people idly hurrying away into space always excited my curiosity. I used to try hard to picture to myself their way of living —but I could not imagine anything very different from our lives. The sense of comparison was lacking. The children we met were all of our own standing. Their lives resembled ours to an almost absurd degree. The beggars in the street seemed to me like Princes Charming, under the spell of an evil enchantment. Reality with all its experience was very far away from me. As I sat on the window-sill, my attention was specially attracted by the tavern. It was situated on the opposite side of the street. The people that came in and out, often with vacillating steps, excited my untarnished imagination. More unconsciously than otherwise I found myself struggling with the weird thought that there existed another world, an ugly, sombre world like the yawning emptiness of the tavern door, swallowing up more and more new people all the time. But the thread of vague sensations was always in-

terrupted in the same way: I was lifted up from the window-sill and a picture-book was pushed into my hands.

After tea, our ribbons and hair were set straight, shoes *mordoré,* on thin soles and with rosettes, were slipped on our feet, the dancing-room was aired, the piano opened. On the sofas along the wall were seated the grown-ups armed with lorgnettes. The ballet-master, Ignatiev, made his appearance with the pianist and the dancing lesson began. We performed rhythmical, plastic movements to music, curtseyed, executed the "four positions," one after the other, made *chassez-croisez* and other *pas,* on outstretched toes, holding up our frocks on both sides with two fingers. After dancing we had to remain very quiet for half an hour to grow cool before leaving, then again in the same antechamber, I was wrapped up carefully in my heavy fur coat and hood and taken home.

On the way I would tell Mademoiselle with a sigh how nice it would have been to have a

grandmother like those one reads about in books, on whose knees one might scramble to touch her soft double chin. This desire always haunted me, but Mademoiselle, deeply shocked by this remark, explained to me that such grandmothers did not exist and that such wishes were not entertained by well-behaved little girls. I believed her implicitly, and felt ashamed of myself and grieved at the same time.

I was seven when father died suddenly of heart failure during the night. It was the first time I had come in contact with death. I was afraid and wept bitterly.

The next days dragged on, full of sadness. My sister and brother came from their schools. My sister and I were clad in black frocks with big white collars. According to custom, the mirrors in the flat were all veiled in respect to the Russian superstition that a man who sees his reflection in a mirror of a house where there is a dead body, must die soon after, him-

self. The whole day people crowded in our rooms, one funeral service followed the other and the air was impregnated with flowers and incense.

I could not get reconciled to father's immobility. The first pang of fear had passed and at night, while Mademoiselle was fast asleep, I softly got out of bed, made my way barefooted to the dining-room and mounting the steps to the coffin, peered into father's face, hoping that he would wake up. But nothing happened and the monotonous reading of the nun penetrated my soul together with the consciousness of death.

The funeral took place on the third day. A military band played hymns, we walked immediately behind the hearse; father's black horse followed at a distance led by a groom. I wept the whole way. I was sorry for father and no less sorry for myself.

Soon mother came from Paris to fetch us and stopped at the Hotel d'Europe. Our meeting took place on the stairs. I asked

Mademoiselle who this smartly dressed lady was, and hearing that it was mother, rushed to kiss her hands, filled with pride.

Mother took us with her to Paris. Arriving there, I was surprised to hear every porter speak French and annoyed everybody by asking who gave them French lessons.

I quickly got used to the new life. We lived in the rue St. Honoré, took our walks in the Tuileries. I had companions of my age, the daughters of mother's friends in the Sacré-Cœur, where she had been educated. We played *toupie,* went to see the Punch & Judy show, the merry-go-rounds, sucked *sucres d'orges* and the time passed extraordinarily quickly and excitingly.

Mother went away again and soon married a second time, summoning us now to Dresden. Here life entered a very definite path. I was placed in a German school and the wife of the Russian priest came to read Russian with me at home and to give me dictation for practice in writing. Up to this time, I was more profi-

cient in French than Russian because French had been the language spoken in our home and among our friends.

We spent the summers in Saxon Switzerland where the excursions were a source of delight to us. We came back loaded with flowers, photographs and hideous "souvenirs" of which I was particularly fond. This period knew only one shadow: the lessons of mathematics with our cousins' tutor. I was so afraid of him that my mind, paralysed with fear, refused to grasp the simplest things and half an hour before the lesson began I started crying without ever drying my eyes. The teacher was distressed by my obtuseness, and this increased my despair. Thus during the whole summer I did not manage to conquer the multiplication table and a hatred for figures remained with me for ever. A year and a half later we came back to Russia, but this time to Moscow. It was arranged that we should enter some private school. The school chosen was very fashionable and very old-fashioned at the same

time. The proprietess was old Madame Bess. Every morning we had to report to her in her room. She sat in a big armchair, enveloped in an ermine cape already quite yellow with age, and her pug on her lap. We had to kiss her hand and then to stroke the pug which snarled, frightening us.

Owing to my insufficient knowledge of Russian, a teacher gave me additional lessons at home. She had a great influence upon my whole inner development. Highly religious (she soon took the veil at the Novodievichy convent), she passed her great faith on to me and I became her zealous follower. In my desire to manifest my zeal, I began to instruct my German maid in the orthodox religion and did so with such obstinacy and eloquence, that she disowned Protestantism after six months. I spent all my pocket-money buying sacred books, lives of saints, and images, distributed the rest among the poor, shutting my eyes tightly as I did in order that, literally, the right hand might not know what the left hand did.

I bought scent and piously poured it over the crucifix, imitating Mary anointing the feet of Christ. It was a happy time of ecstasy and pure unshaken faith without any "why's or wherefore's."

Five years after father's death, mother died just as suddenly. We remained strangers in the family of my stepfather, and as soon as I realised this, I retired into my shell and shut myself up.

We had only a feeble notion as to how our lives would shape themselves. Although mother was rarely at home, her hand had been felt everywhere and she domineered over all governesses and tutors. Now each of them fought for supremacy. They all thought they had a right to interfere and make observations. To my relief, little old Mademoiselle remained at my side. She was gentle and affectionate with me and spoilt me as much as she was permitted to do. But with mother's death her position in the house became insecure; the young English and French governesses seiz-

ing power, formed a hostile *bloc* against us, together with the German tutor.

I passed into the fourth class. I appeared older than my age and I began to want to attract attention, and to flirt a bit. We received a considerable amount of pocket-money, but were forbidden to buy anything for it except sweets, presents and ornaments for our rooms. We were not allowed to choose our dresses and in the evenings were supposed to ask the governess what we were to wear the next day. This rarely coincided with our tastes and caused us many unpleasant moments, as the wish to be smart and dress becomingly was now very much alive in us. Parties and concerts were organised in our school, at which I was not allowed to assist. My schoolfellows, after a careful investigation of their surroundings, also proved to be unsuitable.

I often felt very bored at home. My sister married, I was left the only girl in the house and plans were made for sending me to the Boarding Institute for girls.

2. THE INSTITUTE

THE Institute of the Order of Ste. Catherine, where I was brought in the autumn, was a huge palatial building. Many girls were examined with me in a marble hall crowded with tables covered with green cloth. Owing to the difference between the curriculum at my old school and at this one, I failed in the examination and instead of getting into the next class, the third, I had to remain a fourth former. Thus the beginning was not a brilliant one. I was crushed by the humiliation I had undergone as well as by the new, strange environment. All the pupils were sent at first to a "Russian bath," an institution until then unknown to me, where I was almost smothered by the steam and the heat. Then

we were arrayed in long green woollen frocks, white aprons and pelerines, a black cashmere shawl was thrown over our wet, loosened hair and in this aspect, crimson and stewed, we were taken to our classes. The girls surrounded me, showering a row of questions upon me: What was my name, how old was I, what school had I attended before, whether I was a softy or a tomboy. How did I wear my hair at home, was I in love, and so on without end.

I decided to win over my class with self-assurance and assume a knowledge of life. With perfect nonchalance I made up a few stories about myself, criticised local rules, added a suitable anecdote and immediately became popular. The first night I slept badly in a new bed that was too hard, the sheets too coarse. For a long time I could not get used to making my bed myself, the invariable cutlets were not to my taste and I found that walking in prunello gaiters was uncomfortable. But the privileges of the new life were much more obvious. I was among girls of my own age, the

class-mistresses' attention was not centred on me alone and I suddenly discovered in myself a strong liking for pranks and mischief. We learnt little, whispered more, laughed and listened to reprimands with a condescending smile.

The day began early. The deafening gong along the passages compelled us to jump out of bed in winter by lamplight. We rushed to the water-pump with a towel hanging across the shoulder, fastening up the endless hooks on each other's frocks, tying up tightly the aprons round our waists. Everybody had to be ready when the class-mistress appeared and we then marched in pairs to the recreation hall for the prayer. A girl of the elder form read it out of a special book in the presence of the head of the school. At the end of the prayer we all curtseyed in her direction, wishing her good morning, and went down to the dining-room. Our first breakfast consisted of a mug of tea, two lumps of sugar and a French roll. Our

spirits were particularly low at that early hour. We felt overcome with sleepiness, tormented by lessons not repeated and by the fear of class exercises. Many of us, to avoid a bad mark, recurred to desperate measures, such as cutting a finger on the right hand or taking hold of the chimney of a burning lamp with one's palm, which then became covered with blisters and required a bandage made in the school infirmary.

The first lesson of the so-called "practice" in French or German depended on the class-mistress on duty. Klara Ivanovna supported all our haughtiness calmly and her placid nature enabled her to remain with us until the last form. The French teachers could not stand the test and changed several times a year. We passed through the hands of the most varied types of women. The first I found on my arrival was Mademoiselle B., a young, merry Parisian, with a fluffy hairdress and a slender figure. She paid little heed to us and every free moment left the class to chatter in the passage with her friends. The girls who

sat quiet and well-behaved in her presence, at once took advantage of these absences and began an uproarious tussle. Books flew to all the corners, passionate speeches were pronounced standing on the desks, some girls played on the piano, everybody laughed. Once, in the heat of such merriment, we were taken unawares by the Principal, and Mademoiselle B. left the school. Some governesses made such fleeting appearances that I do not even remember them. One more remained in my memory: Mademoiselle L. who decided to establish a State Duma in the class, in harmony with the spirit of the times, as this coincided with the October Manifesto of 1905. A president was elected, also leaders of parties and all our trifling everyday matters had to be settled in that solemn way. This ended with a big scandal. The whole class split into hostile camps, the opposition took the upper hand, the shouting went on heedless of the president's bell. The scheme had to be abandoned. Its liberalism probably did not appeal to the school

authorities and Mademoiselle L. soon disappeared.

Being one of the tallest girls of our class, I sat on the back bench, the most comfortable place for devoting one's time to extraneous occupations, such as reading novels or writing letters during the lesson. It was considered good form not to attach too much importance to learning. Very few of us were preparing for a laborious life. The greater part, to which I belonged, expected nothing at the end of school but balls, parties and a prompt marriage. In spite of the uniformity carried out by the shape of dress, the food and the whole pattern of life, the diversity between the girls existed all the same and often made itself very apparent. Some were called "sour milk," others "cream." The first despised the second for their thoughtlessness and vanity, while the "cream" were unable to understand practical reasoning and scorned diligence, calling it "fagging."

In my time, school-girl "adoration" still

flourished. Each singled out some particular friend as a favourite. We wrote tender missives, shed tears, persecuted each other with scenes of jealousy. The object of our attention was presented with flowers and sweets, and those of more romantic disposition cut or scratched out on their arms the initials of the beloved. The longing for affection as well as the desire to attract notice drew us to one another.

Often we feigned disappointment and boredom, but on the whole the short holidays, repeated three times a year, did not enable us to raise even a corner of the veil that was drawn over reality. All the windows of the huge school opening on the street were made of dull glass up to the middle and only one window at the very top of the stairs was transparent. We called it the "window of life" and it was forbidden and therefore the favourite place of our meditations. Our regular life was interrupted by concerts, theatres and our favourite and beloved feast—Catherine's Day.

The everyday uniform was rejected for thin batiste aprons with lace. The class-mistresses in their gala, corn-flower silk frocks, continually surprised animated groups as they entered the dormitory. With the soft rustle of stiff woollen skirts, the procession of all the classes, arranged in pairs according to height, moved like a green and white ribbon across the library and the pillared hall into the church.

Candles and lamps were reflected on the pink marble walls and the neat rows of white aprons shimmered on the inlaid floor. The sound of tender voices poured forth harmoniously, interrupted by the red-haired deacon's bass. A tall priest, his eyes lifted to the skies, moved about softly as though to avoid meeting so many curious, girlish eyes.

After a solemn Te Deum and a prayer for prolongation of years that made the vaults resound, the Principal, with a train three yards long and a decoration on her breast, came up to kiss the cross and the pupils followed her, kissing first the crucifix with a familiar movement,

then the priest's hand and after that, with a low bow to the Principal, passed into the hall. The choir drew up on the platform under the Czar's pictures and "God Save the Czar" came forth from every throat in ecstasy.

Then came cries of joy, congratulations, all this in the certitude that there would be cakes for tea, a supper of four courses; that Count Protassieff-Bakhmetiew was to come during the day by order of Her Majesty, and in the evening, in the evening . . . the Ball.

The noise in the dining-room was indescribable, not even the usual "silence" of the Principal was to be heard. On that day one could laugh freely and chatter, chatter without end, not in French or in German, but in Russian, at last!

The hall was ornamented by garlands of roses, sent by the 2d cadet-corps, the boys of that school wearing the same initials as we did on their shoulder-straps were considered as our brothers. The two elder companies and the pupils of the Military Schools were invited to

the Ball. But before that the Count's visit was due.

Three days before his arrival all the Institute was drilled for an hour a day in deep curtseying and simultaneous greeting. Standing in the middle of the hall and clapping her hands, the Principal repeated tirelessly:

"Un, deux, trois!"

At "three" we all had to sink as a wave in a deep curtsey, saying in chorus: *"Nous avons l'honneur de vous saluer, M. le Comte!"* and at the word *Comte* the heads had to be raised and the bodies acquire their usual position.

After three days' drill the simultaneousness of three hundred and twenty inclined heads was achieved and the one care that remained was not to humiliate oneself in front of the august guest. He brought congratulations in the name of the Empress Maria Feodorovna and generously lavished boxes of sweets upon us.

Finally the evening came. The candles in the five big chandeliers were lit at seven in the evening, but our hearts jumped with ex-

citement long before that. At the last moment, after the careful examination of the class-mistress had been submitted to, the forbidden lock was released from the smooth hair-dress and the nose powdered with tooth powder if the face powder had been mercilessly confiscated.

The pupils from the Military Schools and the cadets stood in line. The Principal with the trustees and guests of honour sat upon the platform. The girls of the elder forms, with the Catherine ribbon placed on the shoulder, opened the ball with a polonaise with the cadets as partners, making a deep curtsey as they passed in front of the platform.

When the first candles burnt out the younger girls were sent to bed, new candles were lit for the other ones and the merriment continued. We danced a lot, with an enthusiasm such as we never knew after.

But even here the vigilant eye did not weaken, there were special rules one had to submit to. Not to talk during the dances, not

to dance twice with the same man, not to stand out behind the pillars, etc., etc.

But in spite of the interrupted bits of conversation, the new faces and ecstatic dreams did not allow us to go to sleep for a long time and the night, as well as the next day, passed in the smoke of memories.

The Japanese war of 1904-05 laid its stamp upon the life in our school. The fathers and brothers of many of us were at the front; black mourning pinafores soon began to make a more and more frequent appearance. Recreations were devoted to sewing for the soldiers. Kits were packed and sent to the front. We added letters, wishing them luck, gave our addresses and received touching replies written in a clumsy handwriting. Like our elders, we were certain of victory, of a glorious ending of the war and cried after them, "We'll beat them hollow!" We never entered into the events which were ripening and were remote from all politics.

I was sixteen when the revolution of 1905 broke out. A fever of excitement invaded the school. The teachers missed their lessons, the class-mistresses whispered among themselves. We were not taken out for walks. The teacher of history, a young professor, alone remained longer than usual at his lessons, trying to explain to us the schemes of various parties, spoke of the Social-Revolutionaries, the Social-Democrats, the cadets (Constitutional-Democrats). This did not much interest us, we caught at random a few words concerning "freedom," meetings, new order, and decided to derive possible profit from the chaos that had established itself. A meeting of the three top forms was assembled at once. The distraught class-teachers did not oppose this, as the lack of regular lessons and their personal apprehensions had swerved the school routine from its accustomed path.

I remember the long sheet of paper with twenty clauses of the ultimatum addressed to the authorities after a stormy meeting. It com-

prised the "freedom of hair-dress, increase of dessert, abolishment of marks and permission delivered not only to our brothers, but also to our brothers' friends, to visit us on holidays."

Things developed, however, so rapidly in those days that while we were working at our scheme of aggression, real shooting and fires had started in the streets. We wandered about, frightened, with no more thought of "deriving profit." Those who were willing were sent home.

We did not undress for the night, a guard was established round the school. The Presnia * was on fire.

Early one morning Mademoiselle came to fetch me in a closed carriage and we arrived home safely, avoiding the barricades, but fearing every moment to get caught in a street battle.

Dreary, tedious days followed this. The windows were draped with heavy curtains, no

* Working-quarter of Moscow. Here the revolt of 1905 began and in memory of that event it is called "Red Presnia."

light was allowed in the rooms which could be seen from the street. The sky continually glowed from the fires, shouting and firing were heard in every direction; towards night there was a dead calm. One could hear the tramp of controlling patrols.

The railways did not function. All labour ceased. There was no running water, no electricity. Life was centred around horrible rumours of pogroms and murders. One knew nothing for certain. We believed that the revolt would be suppressed, but could not tell how long it would last or how many victims it would number.

If I am not mistaken, in the end of December the Semenow regiment arrived from St. Petersburg under the command of General Min, and Moscow in several days was reduced to order by arrests and shootings. The cossacks subdued uprisings in the country and very soon life seemed to return to its former channels.

Strolling along the Sadovaia with Mademoi-

selle, we examined the still unremoved barricades, built up of cases, barrels, posts and other litter. Many streets were obstructed with barbed wire, the houses had been damaged by shooting, window-panes were smashed, a large house on the Kudrin Square was entirely destroyed.

Pedestrians walked along the streets without a sense of security, no trams or cab-men were to be seen.

The shops were re-opened, little by little, and soon the inhabitants, rapidly forgetting all their troubles, filled the streets once more.

Had I then come into contact with men of diverse classes and opinions, had the ideas of the people fighting against the existing order of things come to my ears, I might have interpreted and explained events to myself in a more intelligent way. As it was, Mademoiselle never left my side, she understood still less than I did all that was going on around and my only other companions were my schoolfellows.

Returning to school after the Christmas holidays, we found almost all the staff had been dismissed for its too liberal views. The inspector himself had been discharged and the Principal had met with serious disapproval in the Department of the Dowager Empress. The imputation had been brought against her that during the uprising, students were said to have found shelter between the walls of the school.

The programme for history was shortened. The French revolution was totally excluded and the lessons carefully surveyed.

The last year passed as in a dream, we were preparing for the examinations and making plans for the future. The parting with the school touched us deeply. We sobbed, swore eternal friendship, all quarrels and misunderstandings were forgotten. We wandered about the building, bidding farewell to every corner and met the next solemn day with eyes swollen from tears.

The last Mass was sung and we were lined

up in the hall filled with parents and relations. After communion and the speeches of the trustees, we were called in turn to the table and given diplomas, Bibles, and, for those who had deserved them, rewards.

Thus we crossed the threshold of life with little knowledge, but much self-assurance—"muslin-creatures," as the pupils of such schools were called. Everything seemed clear and simple to us: a care-free life, and joys, until then unknown, awaited us.

In my life all seemed to follow a prepared path. The first ball at home opened a series of uninterrupted merry-makings. For the first time my hair was fixed by a hair-dresser who pinned on to my plait the same roses as those that decorated my white ball dress.

I can remember the chilliness of the dancing-room that had just been aired, the scent of the flowers, the arrival of the first guests; then the band, an uproarious crowd of young people, uniforms, light-coloured dresses, a gay cotillion.

But when the guests had left and the light of the numerous candles was blown out, I also remember the disarray of the rooms that suddenly became very obvious, the sadness that overcame me at the thought of the futility of pleasures and the fear of what life might hold for me.

3. THE COUNTRY

IN those days, a young girl "came out" in a series of parties and balls for the purpose of meeting her future husband.

Some married very quickly, others had to "do" several seasons and did not find it so pleasant in the long run as at the beginning. The houses, the faces, the amusements, all were the same.

I devoted only a few months to this pastime and getting married at the end of my first season, retired to the country where we had decided to settle down.

The house was of the Catherine period, one-storied, wooden, plastered and painted in a warm yellow shade. A round stone terrace came out onto the garden, with white pillars

that supported the attic. Two ancient lime-trees formed a thick hat of foliage that covered up the top balcony entirely.

We completely repaired the old house, preserving its style, enlarging and improving it in many ways.

A long alley of lime-trees led in a slope to the pond, which was actually a river. The opposite shore was hilly and covered with an oak-grove which was planted each year with a fresh seedling.

With particular zeal, I gave myself up to the overgrown garden. We cut new walks through the thick underbrush, raised paths, laid out picturesque corners.

In spring I liked to get up at dawn and work with the peasant women who only came for the day. I revelled in the freedom, in the scent of the soil and of the lilacs that surrounded the garden in a thick circle. I rejoiced over every new sprout, every freshly opened flower.

The women and girls, their sarafans tucked up high, worked together under the supervision

of the gardener, and my presence added still more fire to their own zeal. I gradually learnt to call them by their first names, knew all about the births, deaths and marriages that occurred in their families. While they rested and took their meal, I had the traditional Russian country breakfast which consisted of coffee with a special kind of cream which for hours had stood in the warm stove until it had taken on a brownish colour, home-made white bread and different other country specialties.

Our servants had all been in our employ for many years. They came from our village and were very devoted to us. The cook, Ivan Vassilievich, was a particularly fine character, who had given up his life not only to the culinary art, but to all our household, guarding our interests and rejoicing over every new sign of prosperity. He always drew himself up briskly as he came to meet us, snatched off his white cap with a quick movement and said, loudly:

"Wishing you health!"

He then reported, with a beaming face, on the calving cow, or newly hatched chickens.

At first they all observed me scrutinisingly, as one does a new mistress, watched every step, censored my "un-lordly" work in the garden, but finally got used to me and we lived on good terms.

The only one who could not reconcile himself was the old butler Ilja, the type of Gogol's Ossip, an eternally sleepy, dishevelled creature, who had allowed his whiskers to grow and was spoilt to the utmost by his master's bachelor life. He waved his hand despairingly at everything, grumbled and sighed and finally, at my obstinate requests for cleanliness and shaving, decided to part with us rather than give up his precious beard.

Besides the place where we lived and the endless fields that surrounded it, we had two farms on the same estate. Usually after sunset, a jaunting-car was harnessed and to the merry barking of the dogs that accompanied us, we

drove to survey the work achieved during the day.

Our nearest neighbours lived at a distance of seven versts, others at twenty, thirty, and even forty versts. But this was no obstacle to frequent visits.

The bells of the *troikas* announced the arrival of guests and this raised the usual country bustle in the pantry with the samovar, supper and *zakuska.**

The visits did not last half an hour as they do in town, but in a good, neighbourly way people came for the whole day, sometimes for several days running.

In summer, as soon as the guests had rested they were taken to see the horses. The coachman led out the finest of them in front of the terrace with their manes moistened and tails well brushed. Their dry legs were approved of, remarks were made on the low knucklebones, an interest roused in the stallion; all this led to an animated discussion. Sometimes

* *Hors d'œuvres.*

the horses were broken in. Then the whole household was gone over, the new machine exhibited, the price of corn and other country matters talked over. We strolled in the garden, went in the boat, supped in the summer-house; a lot of eating and drinking took place.

The whole district was invited to family ceremonies and then we danced in the garden to a military band. Fireworks were organised, illuminations set up and the whole village called to participate in the feast.

Nevertheless at that time I preferred solitude to everything else. I never had time to be bored, everything was new and full of interest. I loved with all my heart the immense spaces of the fields, with the whirling starling, the smell of blooming corn or ploughed-up earth, and in the winter, the soft whiteness of the snow, the transparence of the air and the silence.

I observed the peasants with keen interest. In those days I still believed in people and in

the value of good intentions. Every kind word was to me a sincere expression of the soul, and, filled with compassion for the poor, I longed to be of use to them. I hoped that soon I would find a way to break down the wall which seemed to exist between us and the peasants.

I never visited them in their huts. It seemed to me that the sincerity of my intentions would be misunderstood and attributed to arrogance, curiosity, or humiliating condescension. But I received them all at home, tried to cure their simple ailments, sent the serious cases to the hospital, arranged that straw, grain and seeds should be delivered to them and persuaded parents to send their children to school.

However, things were not encouraging. I had a number of disappointments and I soon became aware that all was not going as it should, that the peasants, men as well as women, crouching on their knees before us (a custom we always tried hard to abolish) and repeating: "We are yours, you are ours," held a knife, figuratively speaking, behind their backs.

I knew that after every refusal of an unreasonable request, they carried away with them a deep sense of grievance, and if I gave them what they asked for, they looked upon me as a simpleton who had to be fooled and made use of in every way.

The sense of our solitude among this mass of people whom we were unable to understand, filled me with dread. I was particularly conscious of this in church. As I watched the sea of heads from the enclosure, set apart for us, one step higher than the floor, I felt myself standing on dangerous ground. It would take very little to bring to the surface all the hidden bitterness of their hearts. And in the flash of a second we would then be swept from the face of the earth with all our good intentions.

My apprehensions provoked laughter and joking among my family, who for the most part believed in the peasants and did not deem possible a return of the revolution.

Our village was not a rich one, but it contained no landless peasants. I can remember

only Vasska Zimin, the real type of an inveterate drunkard. He lived in a demolished hut and spent all his earnings on drink.

The poorest household consisted of a cow, two sheep and a pig, if not a horse. The huts were covered with straw, and in winter the walls were piled high with the same straw mixed with earth to protect them against the cold winds. Straw was used, also, to heat the houses, for in that part of the Government of Riasan there was no other fuel at all. Of course, under those conditions, fires often broke out and in summer almost every storm coloured the sky red with flames. The wind carried about the clods of burning straw to the neighbouring roofs and the fire spread rapidly. The fire brigade worked lazily, cries and disputes prevented any actual help.

At first, those catastrophes drove me to despair. My soul ached for the ruined people, and I myself lent a hand at the fires. But here again I met with disappointments. One day I saw the owner of a hut which we had been

rescuing with effort from the flames, push a handful of smouldering straw under his house to receive the insurance for it. The peasants were often keen to get the money that enabled them to procure new buildings for the old ones.

They never bothered about improving their homes. The richer peasant lived just as dirtily and carelessly as the poor one, his food alone was better and the clothes he wore on holidays were smarter. During the six years of my life in the country, I never saw a tree planted by a peasant of his own free will and if it were done by administrative order, it did little good, for in a very short time it was brought down or perished for want of care. The village astonished one by the absence of all foliage and the parks of the landowners stood out as oases in the desert with their thick caps of green trees.

In the winter, the peasant-men idled. Home industry did not flourish, they sprawled on the stove and the household work, as well as the care of the animals, fell to the women. It was they, too, who wove the linen and the stuff for

their skirts. The picturesque national costume was still worn in the Government. The women and the girls made a show of their bright-coloured sarafans, their dozens of starched skirts worn one on the top of the other, their embroidered tunics with intricate pleats gathered round the waist. The old women wore long homespun white smock-frocks and I still remember a few old men in tall, felt top-hats.

The square in front of the Church offered a fine spectacle on holidays. The speckled wave of people flooded the lawn, rocked on the steps leading into the church, where, bowing and crossing to all sides, it was swallowed up by the door. Here a strict order was maintained, the men stood in front, the women at the side chantries, whispering and making the sign of the cross over their mouths as they yawned, that the devil might not enter in.

There was no conscious religious sense among the peasants. The villagers went to church assiduously, methodically observed

Lent, prepared for the Sacrament, but all this was performed because it was an established rite, dear to the Russian heart; and Morning Mass was the beginning of a festival where the girl showed off her new shawl and the lad exhibited his dazzling rubber-boots. Lent was kept for reasons of economy, the Lents helping to stretch out supplies until the merry feast day came. The rite was carried out without entering into its meaning and superstition reigned supreme.

In the evenings the youths strolled along the broad village street. The acme of smartness and elegance in the village were new, shining rubber-shoes. The boys wore them on the driest summer days as an ornament. At first the lads kept apart from the girls, shelling sunflower seeds and exchanging jokes. Then the accordion united them all and they started dancing round and round. There were some artists among them who came out into the centre of the circle and urged the girls to partake of their merriment with a special stamping of

the feet and a daring knee-step, accompanied by whistles. And they were unable to resist. They swam forth, with a slight shrug of the shoulder, with hardly perceptible movements of the feet, drawing a circle and uttering now and then a shrill cry from sheer overflow of feeling to the unanimous rhythmic clapping of all the onlookers and the meaningless refrain of the women:

"Dulia, dulia, dulia-dulia . . ."

And how wonderful was the singing of the workmen, going homeward in the evenings, when the air was so transparent that single voices could be heard from our terrace. Everything seemed then so simple, so peaceful and one began once more to believe in a mutual understanding.

One-quarter of the land was leased from one year to another for a paltry sum. These sections very soon wasted away entirely from bad tillage as well as from lack of fertilisers. The peasants treated not only the leased land, but their own as well with utter negligence and it is

only by a miracle that even such rich soil as our deep black-earth continued to produce.

We never imposed fines for damage done by cattle or other misdeeds. No lawsuits ever occurred. The cattle overtaken on our fields was driven into a shed and the owner coming to fetch it in the evening got reprimanded by the land-agent. They seemed to appreciate that, but Heaven knows whether they were sincere or not.

Sometimes I had to be present at scenes that appeared insane and outrageous. A peasant-woman would come all bruised and beaten, weeping and begging for protection against her husband, who was drunk all the time and frequently threatened to kill her. The situation was a delicate one. The woman deserved all one's pity, but her husband could rightly protest against interference in his private life. The woman would continue to yell and beg to have him brought to justice.

The culprit is summoned. A big healthy lad with a wandering, roving gaze is brought into

one's presence. Solomon's judgment begins.

"Did he beat you?" my husband asks the woman.

"He did, Little Father, he did, he almost shook all the soul out o' me, the scoundrel."

"And you did not beat him back?"

"Why, Little Father, could I do so with my poor strength against this here fiend?"

"Well, then, I will do it for you."

And the lad gets some solid cuffs on the ear.

The woman goes away satisfied, the man follows her sullenly, crumpling his cap in his hands.

I am very indignant and unhappy over this, reproach my husband, try to demonstrate the impossibility of such treatment, but in every case, alas! I prove to be wrong.

The next day the lad very humbly makes his appearance on the estate, offers his thanks for the "bringing to justice," promises not to drink and begs to be employed as a workman. And indeed the complaints are rarely

repeated. What positively astonished me was that on all such occasions the peasants seemed to boast of the cuffs they had received and called themselves the "Prince's god-sons."

I was bewildered, unable to solve the great problem as to what attitude one should adopt towards the peasants. Sympathy and compassion slowly died out, as did respect and sincerity. I went on with my task but without the same interest, merely because I had undertaken an obligation. It was humiliating to live in such mutual betrayal. The peasants on the one side with their hypocritical devotion, I, on the other, artificially keeping up the last spark of good feeling.

I had, however, several friends among them to whom I was fond of talking and whom I particularly tried to help, knowing that they would not betray my confidence and possessing proof of their genuine attachment. I remember Mishka Froloff, a lad six feet tall, with a

red mane of hair and clear blue eyes. Later on he became our overseer, but was only a night-guard at that time. It was his duty to protect the house at night and make the rounds with a kind of rattle, a curious instrument used on every estate and in every village for frightening away burglars and, incidentally, preventing their being caught.

I remember how he once scared me to death with his exaggerated precautions. It was in the autumn. I was all alone in my apartments and very nervous. They were situated far from the servants' quarters. In the night, there was a loud knock on the wall adjoining my bedroom. Half crazy with fear, with bated breath I listened to the repeated knocks. They lasted all night at short intervals and I, of course, never closed my eyes, waiting for the long-desired dawn.

In the morning I summoned Mishka. I told him of the mysterious incident, but he did not let me finish my story and explained with a beaming smile:

"'Twas I who knocked, Your Grace, that you should have no fear and know that I was about."

And when one remembers all these dear Mishkas, Pakhoms and Ivans and many others, one fails to connect with them the thoughts of destruction, arsons and desire to sweep us from the face of the earth.

They were quite harmless taken separately, but became inflammable material in the mass. They had no firm principles of good or evil. They were dominated entirely by one motive handed down from one generation to the other: the thirst for land. While feeling entitled to take what belongs to others, there are no people in the world with so keen a sense of property as Russian peasants.

Each of the three villages belonging to our estate had a school. The parents sent their children there very reluctantly, considering the work in the fields and in the house of greater use to them. Often, if persuasions did not help, one had to resort to threats and thus recruit the

children against the will of their parents. I visited one of the schools almost daily to supervise the lessons. The more gifted pupils were sent after three years to a trade school or to the high school in the town, which gave them the right to become teachers themselves.

I preferred the trade school, for we had an oversupply of teachers; many of them lived in misery and without work for years at a time, and being once torn away from the village atmosphere could not reconcile themselves with it any more. Tradesmen, on the other hand, were always required and certain to get work. This opinion was laid to my door in the days of the revolution: "She never wished to have our children educated like gents, wanted to make workmen of 'em all."

In winter evenings, for the enjoyment of the children, the mistresses and I arranged lectures in the school and put on plays. The girls would learn to sew and embroider in these hours; the boys designed and plaited baskets. I longed to set up in time a carpenter's shop at

every school, but the whole atmosphere in the villages underwent such a sharp change after 1914 that my wish to undertake anything died out.

In spring began a feverish investigation into the supply of flower seeds and long conversations with the gardener. I made designs for flower beds and pored over catalogues. Profiting by the peace of country life, I devoted a great deal of time to reading. I became interested in many files of documents belonging to the family of my husband and I had sent to me papers relating to my own family. I spent many hours in reading them and setting them in order. My maternal great-grandfather had emigrated from France to St. Petersburg. I found much very interesting correspondence with persons prominent in France at that time. I remember especially bundles of letters by Louis Philippe and Chateaubriand. All these treasures perished later when our house was burnt down, as did also letters of Bismarck to my mother-in-law, writ-

ten when he was minister of Prussia to the Imperial Court.

My correspondence, too, took up a lot of my time. The mail came twice a week. An outrider had to go twenty versts to fetch it. Only in the last years of our life in the country was a post-office opened at ten versts' distance. In the evenings a fat bag crammed with papers, reviews and letters was brought to us and on those days we lingered longer than usual round the samovar, each absorbed in the reading of his news.

In this way the declaration of war with Germany came to us.

It passed unnoticed, arousing no excitement in the country. The peasants listened to the manifesto, read aloud by the priest, with utter indifference. There were no assemblies, no great discussions. The recruits left with perfect calm, without realising, so I think, what was actually going on. They came to bid us farewell and in the evenings the songs and

accordions of the young soldiers resounded louder than ever.

We heard the manifesto with horror. The danger of war in the unreliable atmosphere that prevailed at the time, made itself felt very strongly. The Japanese war was still fresh in all memories.

The first news from the front brought with it fantastic tales of the legendary cossack, Ivan Kriutschkoff, who strung seven Germans upon his bayonet. His pictures were demonstrated on shawls, jugs and towels and he greatly occupied the peasants' mind. Bloodthirsty instincts began to appear in the form of patriotism.

Often illiterate peasants came to me with requests to read letters from soldiers or write replies. After the traditional greetings from relatives and acquaintances, with the assurance of filial devotion, came the short postscript: "Well and alive and hope God will send you the same. As to the Germans, everything is fine, so I understand."

The village became more desolate every day. Servants were scarce in every household; the difficulty of the situation made itself apparent, arousing dissatisfaction and creating the most convenient excuse for the speeches of the agitators.

Nevertheless the first wandering-orators—so the peasants themselves called them—did not have great success and the effect achieved was due not so much to the fire and persuasive power of the speeches as to the convincing power of the vodka. Any result could always be obtained in the village for vodka. The peasant who offered the company a pail of vodka, received the best partition of land at the division; in summer time, when work was pressing, it was for vodka that labour could be got most willingly. The women and the girls also received some of it then. Now vodka became a political weapon. For half a bottle of vodka, one of our farms was set on fire some weeks after the declaration of war. The undershepherds, who were caught in *flagrante de-*

licto, owned to having been bribed by a lad from town. The damage was enormous, the cattle, the buildings, the grain, all were burned, many workmen lost their jobs, the farm was reduced to a heap of ashes and ruins.

Thus it all began.

In the autumn of the same year, 1914, the Czar came to the seat of our Government. My husband went to meet him in Riasan. I could not, unfortunately, accompany him on account of my son's illness, and remained alone on the estate.

In the evening, as I sat with the child in my arms, the footman rushed in, pale with terror, shouting, "Fire!" I threw a shawl over my shoulders, came out on the terrace and saw a sinister column of smoke and flame rising from the thrashing-place across the road. This time it was in our immediate neighbourhood. I hastened to the spot and found a yelling crowd gazing at the fire, without making a movement to fight it. A huge stack of straw

was burning. The land-agent, unable to compete with this passive resistance, tried in vain to persuade the onlookers to take measures for putting out the fire. Conscious of the atmosphere around, I resolved to suppress the fear and apprehension that overcame me. Doing my best to be heard, I calmly expressed the certitude that the fire had been produced by a carelessly dropped cigarette.

Returning home, I once more turned round to glance at the fire and to my horror saw a new pillar of smoke on the opposite side of the thrashing-place. No more doubt remained that it was arson. Then a third spot flared up and overcome with panic I started to run, fearing lest the fire had been set to the house as well and I would not be able to save the child.

Soon a sea of flames spread over the thrashing-ground. It was as bright as day; the birds, roused from their sleep, flew about in terror, the cows lowed plaintively, the horses in the stables neighed and dashed against the walls. All this joined with a far-away clamour of

voice and the stamping of hundreds of feet.

I rushed to the telephone, begging the constable to send guards for the protection of the house, and gathering papers and valuables into a suit-case, put the boy to sleep in my room, deciding not to undress in order to be ready to seek shelter with our neighbours if it should prove necessary to do so. A few hours later the police came, a sentry was posted and measures undertaken to put out the fire, but it had had time to do much damage and the smouldering straw blazed all through the night.

From this day I lost my peace of mind, also the last spark of confidence in the peasants and insisted upon moving to St. Petersburg. Almost every day anonymous letters came with threats or bad language, in this style:

"Take yourself off while you are in life and health, for it's all up with you anyway. We'll kill the Prince and dance on his grave." Or: "How d'ye do and farewell and don't forget us."

Sad news of our retreat came from the front.

Then came the revelation of the blunders committed by the War Office. The atmosphere became more and more oppressive. The defeats were attributed to officers and officials with German names. There was talk of betrayal and silly rumours were circulated concerning the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and the Grand-Duchesses, who were supposed to carry on secret connections with their German relatives.

The refugees from Poland came in a flood from all the regions occupied by Germans. It was ghastly to see those miserable creatures filling up the luggage-vans with all their belongings. Torn away from their native land, often separated from their families, they wandered aimlessly about the station, not knowing where fate was leading them.

We never thought then, as we watched them, of a still greater calamity hanging over our heads—to be driven away by our own people.

4. THE REVOLUTION

IN the autumn of 1915 we moved to St. Petersburg which had become, by order of H.I.M., Petrograd. From now on we must call it by its new name.

Many people changed their German names to Russian ones, some out of patriotic feelings, others out of precaution. The joke was current that Rosenburg took umbrage if one did not address him as Rosengrad.

In January, 1916, my younger son was born and it took me a long time to get well, so that I participated little in social gatherings and only saw my intimate friends. For the same reason I could not be presented at Court.

Sinister whispering became more and more animated in Petrograd. Rasputin disturbed

everybody, the Czar was reproached for weakness and gossip of every kind was spread about. Rasputin had, undoubtedly, a strong influence upon the Czarina, whose nervous system had been upset by many misfortunes. He managed to conceal his low instincts very cleverly and profited by his hypnotic power over the Czarevitch's illness. It seems to me that the Czar's family, surrounded exclusively by hypocritical adoration, intrigues and courtly flatteries, appreciated the uncouth straightforwardness and roughness of Rasputin, which they mistook for the voice of the people.

The futile discussions of the statesmen slipped trumps into the hands of the revolutionary elements. A general discontent reigned in the country. Everybody expected an upheaval: some thought it would start in the Palace, others, among the people or the army; but nobody foresaw the consequences. We spent the summer in the country. Externally, life followed its undisturbed course and we were far from the thought, as we left in the

autumn for Petrograd, that we were bidding farewell for ever to the old place.

In the middle of February, 1917, all the most necessary foodstuffs disappeared in Petrograd as by magic. The "lines" for bread made their first appearance. Matches were so scarce that to discover a box was considered an heroic deed. Patrols roamed about the town, small groups assembled on the Nevsky, sometimes they gathered into a crowd that clamoured for bread.

On the 27th of February we attended the funeral of the widow of General Min at Zarkoe Selo. When the General was shot by a woman revolutionist in 1906 at a railway station while waiting for a train with his family, Mrs. Min attacked the murderer and drove her off, although she was told that the woman was armed with bombs. Afterwards when the Czar, offering his condolences, told Mrs. Min he would grant her any wish within his power, she only asked that he pardon the murderer. When our car entered Petrograd on the way home from this funeral, we found the streets

crowded with people. For the first time since receiving menacing letters, we saw menacing faces and heard menacing shouts.

On February the 28th, we were awakened by the sound of shooting. The first news came through the cook, who had gone to town in search of provisions. The Volinsky regiment had risen, dealt ruthlessly with its officers and now bullets whizzed in all the streets. With every hour the rumours grew more and more disturbing. One after the other, the regiments joined the insurgents, monstrous details came of the ghastly dealings of the soldiers with their C.O.'s.

The policemen hid from the merciless persecution of the crowd in the garrets from where they were flung out to the pavement on discovery. Others were immersed in kerosene oil and set fire to. The police stations were all blazing.

The persecution of man by man began and the bloodshed roused the mob to new crimes.

For some days I did not go into the street,

watching intently for hours and hours the goings on from the window of my sitting-room. The troops from the front, under the command of Generals Ivanoff and Alexejeff were awaited from one hour to the other to bring things to order. But a queer presentiment whispered to me that this time it was, indeed, the end, and I could find no peace.

The streets became desolate. Lorries raced to and fro bristling with bayonets, red flags were brandished about, armoured motor-cars cannonaded the houses. The shooting continued day and night. We did not sleep, hardly took any food, our nerves were strung to the highest limit.

Then came the manifesto in which the Czar abdicated in favour of the Grand-Duke Michael. The latter's abdication followed immediately, declaring that it was for the Constituent Assembly to decide.

This put an end to all rumours and then began something new, strange and terrible. On the day the manifesto became public I made my

first appearance in the street. Money had to be fetched from the bank and it was less dangerous for a woman to show herself in the street than for a man. On the corner of the Nevsky I went up to have a look at the declarations, pasted on the walls, among which was the manifesto. I read the pathetic words of the abdication and tears flowed down my cheeks. I forgot all about the danger, forgot that I was probably being watched. I was unconsciously bidding farewell at that moment to all the world of my childhood, my youth. I saw and heard around me the desecration of all that I had been taught to respect as sacred. A voice at my side rang out, addressing me:

"Don't cry, m'lady, it might all take a change yet. Who knows?"

A bearded soldier was gazing at me kindly. I was unable to reply, tears were still rising in my throat and smothering me. He smiled at me once more and went his way.

I continued my path of torture. On the pavement of the Nevsky stood tables, in the

place of tribunes, from which clamorous speeches were being made. Double-headed eagles were torn away from the posters with loud yelling. One had to conceal oneself constantly under the nearest doorway from the unexpected cannonade of machine-guns.

In the centre of the streets marched groups of arrested policemen, officials, officers. Some were hatless, with blood streaming down their faces. They walked with bowed heads between the soldiers. I do not remember how I got home.

Then house-searchings began. Soldiers and sailors, armed with guns, pistols and machine-gun belts, invaded the houses several times a day. They walked through all the rooms, hunted in all the cupboards and drawers. They were looking for arms. As we had none, the first party decided to satisfy itself with the innocuous sword of a Court uniform, and one of the sailors fastened it to his belt. The children were at first frightened by their appearance but gradually my elder son, four years old, became

interested in the amount of weapons the soldiers carried on their backs. He probably thought that this scot-free rummaging of strange "uncles" in all the cupboards and rooms was an amusing game. He wished to be taken out of doors, believing that the red flags were the emblems of a holiday and that the shooting in the streets was due to a wolf-hunt. The endless childish "whys" remained without answer.

As a rule the servants saved us from too much searching and cross-questioning by inviting the unwelcome guests into the kitchen where they were fed and given vodka and wine. We did not, however, miss anything about the house after these visits.

The *défilé* of troops going to the Duma to bring their oath to the Provisional Government went on in front of our windows. The Grand-Duke Cyril also marched along at the head of the Guards' equipage with a red ribbon in his buttonhole. Rodzianko, who had actually started the revolution by refusing to disband the Duma at the Czar's command, was now for

some time considered as the saviour of the country even by conservative elements.

In the night, we hearkened to the sounds of every passing lorry. People rode on them when they came to arrest. We were exhausted by endless waiting for the unknown. A decision had to be made. We must fly from Petrograd, but in what direction?

My husband, still firm in his trust of the peasant, chose the country as the safest shelter. To all his questions came touching answers from our estate, with assurances of devotion and promises of protection.

Tickets were bought and the day of departure came. Happily, a few hours before the train was scheduled to leave, the Zemstvo official of our district arrived in town and called on us. Hearing that we were leaving for the country, he tried hard to dissuade us, picturing the true attitude of the peasants. It appeared that the friendly letters they sent were only a bait to the trap which they had set. They were

on watch for us at the station. They boasted, he told us, of their plan to dress us in peasant garments and drag us around the villages as a laughing-stock before the final act of revenge. At this news, we decided to go to Moscow, where the atmosphere was more peaceful, and wait there for further developments.

Something indescribable reigned at the stations. People had completely lost their heads. The trains were taken by assault, the window-panes were broken, people were trampled upon as they tried to get into the cars through the windows. A woman was trampled to death in front of us. The air was filled with cries, moaning and swearing.

By a miracle my husband and I, with the children, the nurse and the French governess, got into a small compartment. The train did not leave for a long time. People hammered with their shoes upon the roofs of the cars where they had climbed, hoisting their sacks up with them. They tied themselves together with ropes in order not to be shaken off the

train and travelled like that in whole families.

The smashed window was curtained by a blanket, it became stuffy and dark in our compartment. Soldiers knocked at the door and shouted, but the passage was so thickly crammed with people that the door could not be opened. The children, huddled up in a corner, watched our anxious faces and did not even cry. At last the train moved on. We sighed with relief and made the sign of the cross.

Arriving at Moscow the next day, it appeared that many of the passengers from the roofs and platforms were missing. As they fell asleep they were thrown off on the way, or pushed down by railway bridges.

But everybody was beginning to think only about himself and rejoiced in having personally escaped this sad fate.

In Moscow the atmosphere was much less disturbed. We rested there for about a month. I made a last effort to go back to our estate.

I sent a devoted maid, Katja, who was a girl from our village, to find out what the sentiment toward us really was like. We telegraphed that the carriage should be sent to the station without saying who was coming. When Katja passed through the village, the peasants rushed at the horses to stop them and dragged her out of the vehicle, taking her for me. On discovering their mistake, they abused Katja for her fidelity to us. She stayed two days in the village only to hear threats and insults directed against us.

When spring came, I decided to go with the children to the Crimea. After waiting a whole day in line at the ticket office, I got transportation to Eupatoria.

We left, intending to stay there all summer. We took nothing with us but summer clothes, convinced that we would return to our abandoned flat in the autumn.

Fate decided otherwise. With these summer clothes we spent long years in the Crimea, cut off from the rest of Russia.

5. THE CRIMEA

THE Crimea surprised me by its restful atmosphere. The Revolution here had taken a peaceful course and the power passed to the Town administration without any complications or bloodshed. I rented a villa close to the sea and organised the life of the children, gradually recovering my calm after all our tribulations, rejoicing in the silence and in the warmth of the sun.

The Crimea at that time was like a Promised Land, where all the people persecuted by famine and arrests fled for safety. Here, somehow, it seemed that all was not lost. From afar, the revolution acquired the character of a temporary crisis. Hunger was appeased, sleep was recovered and the optimistic conversations

of one's friends resurrected one's departed hopes. Gradually even merry-making returned. People refused to look reality in the face; either they did not want to, or they could not, or were afraid to do so.

Summer and autumn passed, and then the papers brought the news of the seizure of power by the Bolshevists and arrest of the Provisional Government. At first, we did not realise the gravity of the situation. There were dim recollections of a "crazy crowd" at the Villa of the dancer, Kshessinskaja, in Petrograd, with "a Lenin" at the head, whom the Provisional Government had not even considered necessary to arrest. Soon, however, we were forced to believe the sad news which had overtaken us in our haven of rest.

Life became more and more expensive, money lost its value and Kerenskis of twenty and forty roubles were cut in ribbons by one day's shopping at the market. Some people went abroad at once, others knocked about at a loss to know what to do next. Still naïvely

believing in the right of ownership, they tried to acquire immovable property.

In November came the news of the Bolshevist uprising in Sebastopol, of the ghastly lynching not only of the officers but even of peaceful inhabitants. Rumours sprang up about the arrival of two cruisers at Eupatoria.

One's gaze turned anxiously towards the infinite smoothness of the sea and the day came when two clubs of smoke appeared on the horizon. The ships moved slowly towards the little town, numb with waiting. Then they opened fire as a warning of power, strength, and implacable justice.

The bullets dug deep holes in the quay and played havoc with several houses. People hid wherever they could. Life stood still. A few hours after the arrival of the cruisers, armed sailors began to dash backwards and forwards in the streets.

Again we had to live through the man-hunting spectacle.

The prisoners soon appeared. They were

taken on board the cruisers and pushed into the bilge. Without court or trial they were brought from there to the deck and shot, and their bodies flung into the sea. Others were simply drowned and at an attempt to escape by swimming, were made targets of. Colonel Novikoff was burnt alive in a furnace. Count Nikolai Kleinmichel was arrested on the accusation of his servants. The sailors searched his house, found nothing, but nevertheless shot the Count. Afterwards, a man who had assisted at his last moments brought to his widow his wedding ring and a letter. With great emotion he told of the calm and dignity with which the Count heard his "sentence." Declaring firmly the immutability of his convictions and refusing to have his hands bound, he unfastened his shirt and offered his breast to the murderers' bullets.

Many of the local tradesmen, landowners and house-proprietors found a martyr's death in those days.

This bloody mob-law lasted several days and,

just as unexpectedly as they had come, the cruisers left for Sebastopol, leaving a trail of corpses which the sea threw back again from its depths. Some were gnawed by hungry dogs before they were found, others were so bloated from the long stay in the water that the mothers and widows recognised them only by their christening cross or their clothes.

"The bloodless Revolution" proclaimed by the Provisional Government was staining its way with the blood of innocent victims.

A mutual hatred flared up. An Army of Volunteers was formed to fight the Bolshevists. Brother fought against brother. For a time we lived under the German occupation. After an attack on the Ukraine, they penetrated into the Crimea. All was quiet under their rule, all excesses were forbidden, but it was hard indeed for a Russian to be under obligation to an enemy with whom he was fighting.

The separate peace and change of internal conditions in Germany brought on by the abdication of the Kaiser, forced the German troops

to withdraw from the Crimea, and we were once more in the throes of a civil war.

At this time there were certain changes within my family circle. My husband and I parted ways. In August 1918, I left Eupatoria and went with my children to Simferopol.

The Volunteer Army increased and became more and more organised under the direction of General Denikin and with the financial support of the English and the French, Simferopol was like any town in the rear of an army. It was crammed with staffs, military institutions, restaurants, gambling houses, cafés, hospitals and debauching officers, while near by in the trenches men gave up their lives and suffered agonies. The alternate successes and defeats of the Volunteer Army and its sad end were due, I think, to the fact that it was not united in its convictions. There was the general slogan to which they all subscribed, the "National Constituent Assembly." After that came endless disputes and discussions. Its speckled

ranks, from Social-Revolutionaries to Monarchists, found no common language. The generals were constantly changed, intrigues went on in the rear, the ranks were filled up with ensigns and the group of heroes, ready to give up their lives for Russia, perished in an unfair struggle. New money was introduced. The Volunteer Thousand was far less valuable than the Duma currency. Romanoff money was bought up and sold, diamonds, houses and land were acquired in quantities.

The orgy of speculation went on in full swing.

It was a new form of activity, a new means of earning one's living. Those who had more circumspection, foreseeing the devaluation, exchanged paper money for diamonds and continued buying up valuables. The high prices nonplussed the sellers—made every sale appear to be a profitable transaction. One bought from one, sold to another for a higher price. A diamond was exchanged for a fertile plot of land, and this land was perhaps exchanged for

easily transportable furs. The payment was executed in Romanoff, Kerensky and Wrangel money. There were also Karbovanzi (Ukrainian) and Crimean currency. They all had their rate of exchange. Percentage was calculated, commissions added, the rise, the fall of values, the demand—all was taken into consideration. Timber, flour, wool were bought blindly and mythical, non-existing merchandise was purchased against notes. Cafés and restaurants swarmed with agents. People were stopped in the street with offers of lucrative transactions. But almost every man, according to his means, carried a "few carats" in his pockets. And people lived on the earned commissions, collected capital and faced ruin. The town became a regular stock-exchange.

My money in the bank began to lose its value every day, and I felt the necessity of going to work before it was too late.

I resolved to open a kindergarten. The time had come when everybody was looking for a

means of living. Small children were mostly left alone at home, unwatched, while their fathers and mothers went to work. In opening a kindergarten, I made it possible for my boys to learn and be educated with children of their age under my surveillance. Besides it seemed to me that no work could be more desirable than to direct young souls in these troubled days. I decided to create a scholarship for soldiers' orphans. Thus, before even finding the necessary quarters, I composed a programme and placed an advertisement in the paper, asking for applications in order to determine the number of children that I could count upon.

The response was beyond my expectation. There was no end to the requests. Very soon there were two hundred pupils and several applications had to be rejected. The staff turned out to be a good one, all energetic young people, each a specialist in his own department. There remained perhaps the most difficult task—to find a location in a town where everything was requisitioned by officers and

where even schools were taken up by hospitals.

I first turned to Governor Tatishcheff. He showed interest in my plan, listened to me with much attention, promised to help me in every way. But as to lodgings, he could not supply me with them, especially for so great a number of children. This was not very consoling, but I did not surrender. I went to Bishop Dimitri. His Eminence received me very kindly, also expressed his readiness to help, but proved powerless as far as an apartment was concerned.

Time passed. The date I appointed for the opening was nearing, but nothing happened. I began to lose patience. Quite unexpectedly a messenger from the Bishop came to me one evening with an invitation to dinner. All the civil and military authorities were present. My neighbour at the table was the Chief of the Garrison, General Lebedevich-Draevsky, and I understood at once that in this way the Bishop suggested whom I should approach with my plan.

Gathering my last hopes, I was the next day in the General's anteroom, at the appointed time. Again I explained my plans to him, but when I touched upon the question of the apartment the General grew thoughtful. There was nothing suitable in view, and he asked me whether I had a suggestion to make. I venturned upon a bold step and suggested the lower floor of the Hotel d'Europe which was unoccupied and had been repaired for some unknown purpose. The General was not very encouraging as to my chances for securing it, since it was the property of the Intelligence Service. However, after a moment's silence that seemed an eternity to me, he rang the bell and summoned two of his assistants. He retired with them to discuss the matter in the next room, leaving me alone with my anxiety amid clouds of cigarette smoke. At last they returned. There was a paper in the hands of one of the assistants. Owing to the great need for my work I was given permission to occupy the lower floor of the Hotel for a kindergarten.

Hardly believing my eyes, infinitely proud and happy I walked home on the wings of my success.

I set to work zealously. It cost me a good deal of money and effort to fit up the place and set in the stoves, but the aim was so interesting and vital that it wholly engrossed me. I succeeded in distributing invitations on postcards for the fixed date. The Bishop officiated at the Te Deum in the presence of all the authorities, the parents and the children.

I got the School Department to permit children who passed the fourth form to enter the lyceum without examinations. The classes were for children from four to eleven years of age and their number increased to two hundred and twenty.

Besides lessons in the day, we organised evening lectures for elders, instructing them in music, languages, gymnastics and painting.

My health suffered in this unfamiliar work, but the success of my plan and the gratitude of the parents supported me.

6. FLIGHT

ALL went well until the spring of 1919 when disturbing rumours were circulated about the Bolshevist approach.

Simferopol began to be evacuated and an offer was made to those for whom it was dangerous to remain, to leave the town. Having experienced Red rule in Eupatoria I decided to brave it once more, thinking that a woman alone with children could run no danger. The kindergarten had to be closed, of course, and I pictured the future to myself in dismal colours.

It was Sunday morning. On my way to church I could not help musing over my fate, as I met cars crowded with my departing friends, an uninterrupted line of military carts and regiments, singing as they marched. The

haste was feverish. Riders came dashing about on foaming horses, suspicious-looking characters appeared in the streets, and the shops that had closed on account of the holiday seemed to have no intention of ever opening again.

After church I went to the café, *A Cup of Tea,* and opening a newspaper became engrossed in my reading. All of a sudden a panting A.D.C. attached to the Chief of the Garrison rushed to my side. He had been searching for me ever since the morning to persuade me in the name of his chief to leave with the last officers' train, in an hour. Seeing my surprise he hastily explained that several lists of the Reds had been found with the names of the citizens who were to be arrested and my name was among them.

There was no time left to think. I came home in the A.D.C.'s car, collected the children, all the remaining money, and without changing my clothes rushed to the station, leaving a trustworthy servant in my flat.

I only came to my senses in the train. It

appeared that we were bound to Sebastopol. The usual two hour journey lasted twenty-four hours. The train that preceded us had had an accident. Almost directly after leaving Simferopol the officers' train, in which we found ourselves, began to burn, the fire having been set by Red agents. We had to change into a luggage-van. There was no food, the children were hungry and thirsty. The evening was chilly and we had no coats, no blankets. Happily the sable pelerine I had thrown over my shoulders helped to warm the children. After a tormented night we reached Sebastopol at dawn, but the train stopped at two versts' distance from the station and I had to crawl under the cars with a three-year-old child in my arms all the way. My strength was ebbing away. There were of course no cabs at the station; a peasant with a cartload of milk took pity on us and gave us a lift. Thus we reached my brother's house, but it was four in the morning, the house was locked and we had to wait two hours, sitting on the steps.

I found the same picture of haste, packing, departure in my brother's flat. Sebastopol was being evacuated and the *Danube* was to sail in the evening under my brother's command. I, too, decided to go. The atmosphere in the town was not a reassuring one. The crew on the French battleships had declared their sympathy with the approaching Bolshevists and run up red flags. Drunken sailors wandered about the streets arm in arm, singing. On the ship, ready for departure, the officers watched the crew with a vigilant eye. Agitators and spies who had smuggled themselves aboard were arrested.

We were preparing to sail and bought provisions. We had no knowledge of how long we would be gone nor whither we were bound. A sealed envelope naming our destination was handed to my brother with orders that it was not to be opened until we were out at sea.

The *Danube* took a long time to get loaded with coal and necessary supplies. Up to the last minute, families came running with their

bundles begging to be allowed on board. As much as space permitted it, they were accepted and the crowd gathered on deck suggested people who had been burned out. No laughter, no conversation was to be heard. All the faces wore a weary and preoccupied expression. It was whispered around that we were bound for Constantinople and fear gripped the heart at the idea of finding oneself in a strange country, without money and clothes.

My brother's family and I with my boys disposed ourselves in the captain's cabin. The children, engrossed in the novelty of the surroundings and the sea journey, did not bother us much. The news of our destination was awaited by all with great anxiety. At last, when we were out at sea, the seal of the envelope was broken and the orders were to take the direction of Novorossijsk.

The overloaded *Danube* moved slowly, the passengers rejoicing over this, as no one was in a hurry to begin a refugee's existence. A soldier's ration was delivered to each man on

board from the general kettle, but in spite of this hunger threatened many at landing.

We sailed six days to Novorossijsk, from there we were to continue to Anape and it was up to the passengers to choose between the two. I decided on Anape from considerations of climate as well as because the atmosphere there was more peaceful than in Novorossijsk, where volunteer detachments were being gathered.

As soon as we landed I started with the children to look for a place to live. Economy was the principal condition as one had to stretch the small sum remaining in one's hands to its greatest length. Therefore, my choice fell upon a plain cossack hut beyond the town limits. The furniture consisted of iron beds, a wooden table and straw chairs, but everything was clean.

I began to feel like a Robinson Crusoe, or at least as a comical caricature of one, in my silk coat and skirt, light suède shoes and hat trimmed with roses. The white sailor suits of

the boys had acquired all the tints of the rainbow. I was in despair. For the first time in my life I found myself without a servant. Washing had to be attended to, cooking, house cleaning. I was entirely ignorant of how to do any of these things and foresaw difficulties at every step. The children had to be fed, however, and I decided upon what seemed the simplest dish to prepare—maccaroni. Thinking it over on my way to the shop, I decided that one pound was not enough for my little family, and taking five, returned home triumphantly.

With infinite trouble I managed to light the stove and putting a stewpan with cold water on the fire, threw into it, without a moment's hesitation, all the maccaroni. To my horror, it began to crawl out as the water started boiling and I tried to push it back with a spoon. A gluesome sticky dumpling was the result, but we had to eat it in the absence of anything else. "The first pancake turns out a clod," according to the Russian proverb.

Putting the children to sleep on the hard wooden bed and covering them up with the same sable cape, I began to wash their underclothes and suits. I rubbed them until my hands were raw, but the clothes, though cleaner, still retained their peculiar marble design. I had to admit my utter inefficiency.

The first week was a torturing one. I could not straighten my back after the hard, unfamiliar work, my body ached from the wooden bed, time did not suffice for all that had to be done and the children irritated me. The cakes I baked were hard as stone, the soup tasteless and the boiled meat retained its scarlet color. Later on I learned what a mistake I had made to wash it so thoroughly in hot water before boiling and to salt it as soon as it was put into the water. Experience taught me everything gradually and I managed even to make sailor suits for the children out of sacks, cutting them out with tiny nail scissors which chanced to be in my handbag.

The time passed; the money waned away.

There was no sign of an early return to Simferopol. Much talk was going on about Kolchak and his numerous army, but that was in far-away Siberia.

I sold for a paltry sum a ring with a large diamond, then a second one with a black pearl. The jewellers, profiting by the desperate situation, fixed ridiculous prices and paid in piles of worthless paper.

In the midst of frightfully hot weather, cholera broke out. The epidemic spread rapidly. Several cases of death occurred in our yard. God protected us from it in spite of the conditions we lived in.

Thus three months passed. At last local papers began talking animatedly of the advance of the Volunteers, and at the end of June the *Danube* came to take us away. We returned once more to Sebastopol, cleared of the Reds by that time.

I hastened home, to rest in a soft bed, change my frock that had been reduced to rags, and without lingering, decided to leave the same

day for Simferopol. Not only the station, but all the platforms were crowded with waiting people, sitting and sprawling on the ground with all their bundles. Only luggage-vans were in action and the passengers spent days waiting for the opportunity to get on a train. We, too, made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the ground. The sun was broiling, the air oppressive, remains of food lay around and no water was to be got anywhere. Tormented by thirst, tired and exhausted we waited until the night for our train to come and blessed our fate when we found ourselves in the corner of a dark cattle car. I approached Simferopol in great apprehension, not knowing whether I would still find there my servant, my flat. Many misfortunes and trials have to be endured to be able to rejoice as we did when after washing and changing we sat at a carefully laid table and found ourselves at home.

My flat had remained in perfect order, owing to a mere stroke of chance. At the very be-

ginning of the revolution a young officer used to come to our house. He lived alone, was very often in bad financial straits and we helped him as much as we could. In 1918 he joined the Polish Legions and we lost sight of him. Suddenly, when the Reds entered Simferopol, the young man turned up in their ranks as the commissar of the Soviet Police. Wishing to repay me for the past and knowing that I lived in that town, he immediately found out where my flat was, thinking he might be of some protection in case of necessity, and, learning that I had left, went to live in my apartment in order to save at least my belongings. When the Reds retreated, he left me a letter full of self-reproach for the betrayal of his convictions, begging that I would not despise him and so on. Later on I learned that he fled from the Reds, went back to his people and met a glorious death in the ranks of Shkuro.

On meeting friends, one exchanged impressions of the last months. Those who had remained in Simferopol had got off compara-

tively well, as the Reds, this time, did not employ their methods of terror. The intended victims had disappeared in time and they were forced to satisfy themselves with arrests and detentions in cellars. The Bolshevists left the town without battle as the Volunteers approached, abandoning ammunition and arms on the way. The prisoners were released, everybody took up once more their little tasks, the market was opened, commerce began to flourish. The bourgeoisie called itself a "Jack-in-the-box." No sooner was the pressure lessened than it lifted its head bravely once more. Of course, repression on the part of the Whites was not lacking. Spies, agitators, deserters were arrested and sentenced to capital punishment.

General Slashcheff tried to keep discipline and order with an iron hand. He was tall, rosy-cheeked, still young, and wore his cossack cap boldly pushed back off his white hair. He had the reputation of being a crank, travelled in the train with a pet parrot and his orderly

was a woman disguised as a boy. He was very popular among the soldiers, in spite of his peculiarities. They appreciated his personal courage as well as the bad language that he used freely, not only in conversation but in printed commands as well.

It seemed that this time the Whites, repossessing themselves of the Crimea, were not only going to protect it from a new invasion, but would penetrate deeply into Russia. The first successes winged all our souls. We wanted to believe and tried to do so.

Life became again hard for many, from a financial point of view, but one could work and trade, everybody was busy at something, and no suffering was to be seen. People who speculated successfully again earned great sums of money and helped others to exist. Paper thousands, having no security behind them, were spent more freely than ever. The idea never struck anyone to put them aside. Pleasure-seeking was general and often exceeded all limits.

Everybody learnt to live from day to day, with no thought of the morrow. One profited by the sun, by the advantage of a moment, knowing through experience the uncertainty of chance.

Was this thoughtlessness or deep philosophy?

I, like many others, had by that time become utterly destitute. Diamonds, jewels, furs, all were gone. But desperate situations give birth to desperate enterprise. In spite of loud protests on the part of the Bank Director, who considered my action reckless, I laid hands on all my thousands and purchased with them material for summer frocks. Finding two women who could sew, we started to work in my lodgings. By the end of the week, the frocks were finished, and I was ready to sell them, pasting an advertisement to that effect on the front door. We let them go at a low price to attract buyers and they were sold at once. For the money that we obtained we bought more ma-

terial and repeated the same experiment with the same success. Orders rained upon us and very soon silk was substituted for cotton material. I gave lessons and embroidered underclothing in addition. I had learnt not to keep the surplus money, but to buy valuables with it that I could sell at an urgent moment without loss. My workshop was now thoroughly organised with cutters, seamstresses and a fitter. We had already acquired the name of a "Salon." I received orders, talked to clients, gave advice and often had to endure the whims of my patrons. Amusing experiences, too, happened to me in my new capacity. One day a smartly dressed woman came to ask me to bring her some patterns of white crêpe de chine. When the day's work was over, I went to the address given. The maid, hearing that I was a seamstress, left me to wait in the anteroom and went to announce me to her mistress. The latter was in no hurry to see me, and I spent an hour waiting. At last I was received with a short nod without being asked to sit

down, and the lady took the patterns from my hands, without even glancing at me. I stood there, waiting. After making her choice, she looked up at me and catching sight of a piece of valuable old lace on my shoulders asked me with surprise:

"Where did you get that lace? Will you sell it to me?"

"No, I have no need to sell it at present," I answered. "I am glad to say these are the remains of the past."

She glanced at me more affably and began, slightly apologetically:

"You see, I came to you by chance. I had been recommended to the salon of Princess X, but I was not certain of the address and wandered into your workshop on the way."

"You went to the right address," I replied.

Then a curious change took place. The woman became very much confused, flushed scarlet, became fidgety, offering me a chair and many apologies. I remained standing and answered with a smile that if this was the way

she treated seamstresses I did not wish to be an exception and did not feel either hurt or humiliated by her behaviour. Afterwards we became great friends. She proved to be a very nice person.

I derived immense satisfaction from the conviction that I was earning enough money to keep myself and the children. My energy and self-confidence increased all the time and nothing that life might have in store for me could make me afraid any more.

Simferopol at that time was gradually filling up with new military groups. The Markoff and Drosdoff troops arrived, and requisitioned space for lodgings. Some officers came to the house where I lived, rented three rooms from Colonel M., and wanted more. The sitting-room was given up to them. When they heard of the workshop, they took me to be a professional seamstress, and came to me one day with the undisguised intention of trying out my attitude towards their amorous advances.

They were coarse, uncouth ensigns, emphasising their superiority as heroes and undermining the reputation and ideals of the Volunteer Army by their behaviour. One of them asked, coming up close to me:

"Will you make me a vest, Madam?"

"If you like," I replied, trying to form a barricade with the table against his aggression.

"Payment in nature, eh?" he continued, half-closing his eyes.

Pretending to misunderstand his meaning, I declared my willingness to be paid with flour and other foodstuffs instead of money.

He did not go on with the conversation, half vexed, half surprised.

In the night a drunken brawl went on behind my wall. Somebody knocked at my door, begging me to come and take part in their merrymaking. I was frightened and could not go to sleep. It was sad to feel afraid of one's "protectors" and to see the dissolution of principles and discipline in the Army. It went so far that in the evenings, catching sight of a

uniform in the distance, women hurriedly crossed the road.

But I saw little of my surroundings. Tied down to my work, day after day, without time to take any fresh air and often working late into the night to finish pressing orders, my health gave way. When summer came I was in need of rest and wanted to provide the children with sea-baths and a sand-beach instead of the dust of the town. With the first warm days we moved to Eupatoria. Money was now counted in millions and life resembled its inflated figures, without order or security.

The pulse of Crimean towns beat feverishly. Presentiments of danger pierced the heart in spite of assurances of the invincibility of the fortifications at Perekop, which dominated the entrance to the Crimea. This summer brought me a heavy sorrow. My younger son developed tuberculosis of the knee-bone and had to be put in a plaster cast. All my care, all my attention was centred on him.

Selling the valuables earned through my work, I rented a neat little house with adjoining stables, bought two pigs, some hens and rabbits, laid in supplies of flour and butter, and to make life less expensive began to feed five or six people at home, doing the cooking myself. By giving lessons and embroidering in addition, I managed to live quite comfortably and furnished my flat very cosily. I began to become more and more conscious of the fact that there existed another life totally unknown to me, a life in which, through personal effort, one may obtain results that offer more satisfaction, in spite of everything, than an unruffled existence on an annuity.

My miniature household reminded me of country life and of the joy of the fields from which I had been torn away. I counted my hens, prided myself on my fresh eggs, formed plans concerning the future porklings. The illness of my boy kept me close at home, and I isolated myself completely from all surrounding life. I was not allowed, however, to

rejoice very long in the good things I had acquired with my own hands. I forgot that we lived behind a dyke of doubtful solidity. Its collapse must sweep away in a second the fragile structure I had erected. All of a sudden, the merciless flood rushed through Perekop; and people, driven mad with terror, in an attempt to save their skins, fled from it with cries of despair:

"The front has been broken through. The Bolshevists are advancing!"

7. THE BOLSHEVISTS

EVACUATION once more. Once more Russian fleeing from Russian, from tortures, bullets, ropes. Is this, indeed, the end of the "Great and Indivisible"? Was this not the watchword of Wrangel's army for Russia's future? And why do the Wrangel Eagles now retreat and not attempt a supreme resistance? But the men at the front are exhausted, weary, their strength is undermined by typhus, while the officers at the rear have long ago packed their suit-cases and are waiting to sail away.

The ships lying at anchor were accepting passengers uninterruptedly. The troops were retreating by land to Sebastopol and sailing from there. The whole quay next to the harbour was crowded with people, bundles, cases,

baskets. I, too, was offered a place, but this time I decided to stay on. The doctor warned me of the danger that threatened my son in case of a journey and, besides, I had little faith in a prompt return of the departing troops. I could have stood once more the refugee's life in Russia, but I had no strength to emigrate. Remaining in the power of the Bolshevists, I risked my life. Fleeing from it, I risked the life of the child. Even if this had not determined me, I doubt if I would have had the strength to leave my country. The fate of my elder son also filled me with anxiety. I had let him go on a visit to my sister in Yalta a short while before. The impossibility of taking any kind of action or learning the truth about anything, forced one to submit to fate. It was not until three years later that news of them reached me from abroad.

All night the troops marched along in silence, and the rhythmic step of heavy shoes measured away the minutes and hours that brought us nearer to a new, unknown period

of life. I remained standing in the street for a long time that night. The sea was as of lead, the sky grey, the ships loaded with refugees still stood at anchor and rocked to and fro from the fierce squalls of wind.

Everybody around seemed pathetic and helpless. There was no one from whom to seek support, no one to believe in, no one to rely upon.

The inhabitants of the town, getting ready for the arrival of the Reds, closed up their windows and locked the doors. Some rushed about, trying to gather in a supply of provisions, but Wrangel money was not accepted any more.

It was still dark when the last trains of the retreating were heard no more and the town sank into a dead silence.

Sitting fully dressed at the bedside of my sleeping child, I felt a tremor go over me. I had just set fire to the last money I possessed. We had been warned of the danger that threat-

ened anyone who would keep this kind of currency, proving thus his hopes of Wrangel's return. I could live two weeks on the food supplies I had stored away. And then? How to earn enough Soviet money to provide my child with milk at least?

And if I am arrested, what will happen to my little, helpless invalid?

The tremor grew stronger and stronger and in spite of all the strength of will I summoned, my teeth began to chatter feverishly.

More from a feeling of self-preservation than with the hope of earning anything, I posted a notice that night on my door:

Will mend clothes and under-clothing.

My offer might prove useful to soldiers after a long campaign, on the other hand it gave me at once the aspect of a working woman in their eyes.

I regained my calm and continued waiting, harkening to every sound in the street. But the noise of the sea alone came to my ears, and I dropped off to sleep in my chair. I awoke at

dawn with the sound of songs and rolling artillery. A knock at my door with the butt-end of a gun brought me back to reality.

It had come—the Bolshevists were there.

About twenty soldiers of the Thirtieth Siberian division, in fur hats with long earlaps hanging down to their shoulders, pressed through the open door. My neat little flat was filled in one moment with the fetid smell of cheap tobacco, boots, and with bad language. A half hour later the floor was over-laid with the bodies of sleeping conquerors.

I watched in silence. One had to get used to everything. Then they washed in the kitchen, boiled tea and seizing all that they found handy, left my house.

During the day three Red commanders came with an order to occupy a room. They introduced themselves: Rosen, Romanovsky, both former officers of the old Guards' Finland regiment, the third a plain sanitar. They all three lived in one room. Romanovsky was an inveterate drunkard. His friends often used

to tie him up and leave him, taking the key of the room. He screamed and tossed about, then the cries turned to moans and finally died away completely. Rosen, a tall red-haired Lett, usually maintained a gloomy silence. One day he asked me to give him French lessons in exchange for tobacco and bread. His conditions were to begin to study the language by translating a book on ancient history. I did not care, and agreed to it.

The inscription I had pinned to my door attracted the attention of a soldier. He brought me a pair of trousers torn by a sabre. Half an hour later I had some Soviet money in my pocket for milk. But my client was, unfortunately, the first and the last.

The nicest of my three lodgers proved to be the sanitar. He would come to me in the evenings, ask to be permitted to have a cup of tea and to listen to stories of "former life." He listened enraptured, asked for explanations, interrupting all the time.

"It's for such a life that we're fighting, com-

rade," he would say. "That every man should be able to enjoy the beauty and luxury which were the privilege of but a few before. And if we don't succeed in this—to hell with it all."

It was he who, bidding me farewell as he left with his division shortly afterwards, whispered, looking around:

"Never mind, comrade, don't you worry. Although I'm a Bolshevist, I can tell you this: from anarchy to monarchy there's but a step—and this here is anarchy."

And we, the "surviving bourgeois," lived on nothing but rumours, catching them in the air and passing them to each other as facts. It was said that General Slashcheff had not evacuated but was hiding in the mountains with considerable forces, awaiting an attack from the sea, in order to fall upon the Bolshevists from the rear.

Many officers did indeed hide in the mountains where they were supported and fed by Tartars. They were called the "Greens" and their existence gave birth to legends. "From

the most trustworthy source," it was repeated that the Reds were about to leave. Dates were fixed; lively betting went on. If the date did not coincide with the new style calendar it was changed to the old. These were all dreams. The truth was that we never knew on going to bed whether we would awaken in the morning. Arrests threatened us all at any hour and in those days an arrest was equal to death. Headed by a chosen *troika* the *Tcheka* worked indefatigably. Secret denunciations came pouring in from all kinds of informants. But the *Tcheka* did not consider this sufficient to get hold of all "enemies of the proletariat," according to the official idea of class war. They started a system of successive registrations for everybody, pretending that it was done in order to exchange previous documents of identification for Soviet passports. First, the officers were ordered to present themselves, then nobles, priests, tradesmen, proprietors, and finally, all who had come to the Crimea after the uprising.

And everybody answered these summons, trusting them, but many of those who went, women and men, never returned. Some came back only to disappear later. According to the Bolshevist expression at the time, they were "laid out for expense," that is, shot. Their papers were actually marked "W.R." which are the Russian initials of this booking transaction. I came under three categories of registration, but my Communist lodgers advised me not to go. And I did not, deciding that if they remembered me, they would come of their own accord, but it would be folly to remind them of my existence.

This saved me.

Troops were not allowed to remain long in one place, the divisions were relieved from time to time and soon my lodgers left Simferopol. Those who came next proved to be less conciliatory and demanded that I leave my house, to which they had taken a fancy, at once. They gave me eight hours to make my departure,

and put at my disposal a room on the third floor of a house in the same street, permitting me to take along with me only what I could carry myself. All the calculations that my food supplies would last me for a time were shattered. I decided, however, to try and kill the pig, in order that we might have something to live on at the beginning. It needed much persuasion to make the house porter do it. Already it was considered a crime to dispose of one's belongings. After killing the pig, he brought the carcass to the kitchen and vanished immediately. My maid and I found ourselves in a difficult situation, perplexed as to what we should do next. We tried to singe it, but it was impossible because of the long, wet bristles. We managed to find a safety razor, and, soaping the pig, I shaved it. We dragged it in sections to our new lodging and salted it; then undertook to bring the other things. But we only had the time and strength to carry the bed on which lay the invalid child and our own beds and clothes. When we returned for the

silver, china, and a few other belongings, the door was locked, the flat occupied, everything requisitioned.

The new room was a thoroughfare in a flat occupied by sailors; from five in the morning until late at night everybody passed through it to go to the kitchen or bathroom. I learned to dress in my bed under the blanket and even to sleep through this uninterrupted transit. The flat was not heated; we froze in our fur coats; and still we went on with our aimless, meaningless existence. The child had to learn to lie. He was told not to reveal his name, to plead ignorance when questioned concerning his family and past life, since very often parents were traced through the children. My boy did not realise the danger, and one day, returning home, I found him in an animated conversation with a sailor who was sitting on his bed. At my appearance, the sailor instantly slipped away. Fearing no good from that I asked my son anxiously:

"What did you talk about?"

"Don't worry, mother. I didn't say anything about you; only about myself."

I was terrified and awaited the most ghastly consequences, including the reappearance of the guest with a gun to arrest me. Soon, indeed, someone knocked at the door, which was contrary to custom, as usually people came in without asking. The sailor appeared, one hand hidden behind his back. My heart fell. But coming closer to me he smiled, and, placing on the table a small basket of apples and eggs, said boldly:

"That's to show that I've heard from the boy who you are. Hope you'll let me help when I can. I've been in the Naval Guards and for that reason you've got all my sympathy."

His kind words were like a balm upon an open wound. But he was afraid to arouse suspicion and left immediately, begging not to be thanked for such a trifle.

I took the risk of trying to find work, but it was in vain. I was turned down every-

where. In the anteroom of an institution, a kind-hearted man who registered applications, returned my papers to me and advised me to get out as soon as possible and avoid unpleasant consequences. He was right. It was better to remain forgotten just now. Perhaps later the tide would flow back a little.

Besides registrations and house-searching, the local authorities announced that there would be certain days appointed for "pinching the bourgeoisie." On these days from early morning until midnight no one could leave the house either to fetch water or medicine. The town was separated into districts and the *Tchekists,* accompanied by soldiers and carts, visited all the houses in turn. These days had a double purpose: the people who sat in hiding were discovered and at the same time things could be requisitioned on "legal" grounds. From one who owned three frocks, one was taken away; one could keep two changes of under linen; straw hats and neck ties were not despised. All this was heaped

up on the carts and who knows what purpose these articles served later on.

After a short time we were again chased from our room to the top floor but our possessions were so reduced by "pinching" and we were so used to moving that we found it an easy task. We were like driven beasts and submitted to the power of the gun. It was still worse when our room was again taken from us a week later. This time we were actually thrown out into the street. To all my requests that they give me some sort of lodging I got one answer:

"You must do what you can."

My efforts to find shelter proved all in vain, but my maid saved the situation. Her friends now were all influential people and through them she managed to get a permit to occupy a watchman's small house down beside the sea in the large park of an unfinished villa. Protection was still to be had with influential connections. The remoteness of the house from

the town led us to hope that we might be forgotten. Loading our beds, which formed by now almost all our belongings, on a wheelbarrow, we first brought them and then the poor boy who by now was growing used to all our vicissitudes. There were no double panes in the house and the floor was of stone. In one corner stood a little garden stove of brick, clumsily put together, with an immense broken chimney. It had to serve for heating. Gathering dry branches in the garden we tried to light it. The smoke rolled back into the room, scorching our eyes, the damp branches hissed and smouldered and tears flowed down our faces, but we managed at least to warm our frozen hands.

Kerosene had vanished from the town long ago. A lump of cotton wool, dipped into a saucer containing a little oil, served as a source of light, and sleep was the only salvation—the escape from reality. The Communist paradise took time to install itself. At first the market continued its existence, but it was soon closed.

A gratuitous daily ration of bread and a monthly allowance of other foodstuffs was announced. The ration was a substantial one and I stood for hours with a sack on my back in a crowd of people waiting in front of the district shop. The supplies left by the Whites and requisitioned in shops were at first distributed with a generous hand. But very soon these sources were exhausted and then the strangest articles were handed out to the people instead of foodstuffs.

The ration consisted then of several pounds of dried fish, groats, two bottles of oil, acorn coffee, a pound of dry mustard, the same amount of laurel-leaf, pepper and tobacco. One day I received by chance a great quantity of caviar, and lacking bread we ate it with wooden spoons to the point of nausea. English military kits were distributed, too, among the inhabitants, regardless of sex. We carried them, as well as everything else we did not need, to the "jostle." This institution flourished at that time with particular brilliancy.

We had returned to the Stone Age, to primitive forms of life, when trade becomes an exchange of commodities. People of all ages, classes and professions gathered in a narrow space between two rows of houses, occupied formerly by shoemakers, ragmen and working people. A surviving general, with a towel thrown across his shoulder, carrying several spoons in one hand and an alarm clock in the other, obstinately offered his merchandise to a peasant in exchange for a pound of lard; a lady was quarrelling with a Tartar; several people stood about desolately with such hopeless articles as kid gloves, fans, starched collars, unable to find buyers. For a ham, people took off their suits, coats, hats, on the spot. In time I came to know that a sheet secures three days of life, a towel brings half a pound of bread, that even the glass out of picture frames can be exchanged. Professionals in this sort of trading whisked to and fro among the milling crowds profiting by the lack of experience of the

amateur tradeswomen and buying up their articles for nothing at all, then exchanging them at once to their advantage.

Even here, out of this heap of rags, emerged future capitalists.

In early spring the garden where we lived was occupied by a training-school for prospective officers in the Red Army and fifteen soldiers were lodged in the gardener's house next to ours.

My maid had meanwhile become my sister on paper as it was forbidden to have servants, and she refused to leave me to my fate.

Dragging through the tedious winter months in the dampness and in the smoke of the stove, we rejoiced in the first rays of sun and carried the boy into the warmth outside while we sat on the steps of the house.

Thus began our acquaintance with the soldiers. They spoke to us and graciously allowed us to continue gathering branches in the garden for the stove.

It was hard to get used to this unequal equality and suppress the revolt that rose at times in one's heart. The gun forced us to be silent, but as soon as it was not pointed at us, so to speak, we became conscious of the degrading humiliation laid upon us. The hopelessness of establishing equality was apparent, not only between us, who had become pariahs, and them, the new masters, but even between the people of their own group. Take, for example, our neighbour Kusnetzoff. Having just been promoted from a plain soldier to chief of the training-school, his first step was to change his khaki-coloured shirt to a white one, his greased boots to patent leather ones, and, assuming an "intelligent" air, walk with a negligent, arrogant stride, brandishing a cane. Their wives wore the hats which we had exchanged for their shawls, manicured their nails, and when permission was restored to keep servants, engaged as cooks the widows of officers who had been shot.

This new aristocracy grew like a mushroom

on dissolution and demoralisation, but its fierce growth led just as rapidly to annihilation. The unexpected rise went to their heads like wine and lured them to embezzlement; and embezzlement brought execution. Nobody remained long on top. They destroyed each other, through envy. Each man wanted to be above the other, and talking of equality dreamt only of promotion. The idealistic leaders probably reigned in Moscow. We did not see them; but the representative of Central Soviet authority, the Hungarian Bela-Khun, raged so ferociously in the Crimea, that in Simferopol alone about eight thousand five hundred people were killed by the stroke of his pen. Later on we heard that his cruelty was disapproved when it became known to the rulers in the Kremlin. Lenin himself recalled him. At that time we only knew that there were such executions and the way in which they were done. The victims were first undressed, then chased in groups into a hut where they waited their turn while the first hundreds dug their

own graves and were shot. The walls of the hut were covered with inscriptions of farewells to relatives. Long after, the people of the town would visit that garden of torture as one goes to a shrine.

We were haunted by bloody nightmares; this was not only true of the persecuted. Those who put us to death were tortured in their sleep by remorse. I, myself, was a witness to the hysterical outbursts of some of the *Tchekists* whose lodgings were close to the rooms of friends of mine. In their dreams they shouted, cried aloud, and begged the forgiveness of those whom they had shot the day before. It was awful to hear behind the thin walls the screams of an awakened conscience.

Perhaps we would have felt sorry for them and considered them as victims too, if we had not known that on the following day they would go their ways unperturbed.

Equality, fraternity and freedom wrote themselves in letters of blood on the consciousness of those left behind.

It was evening. Breaking up small branches from the heap of boughs gathered in the garden, I lighted the stove with them to prepare our dinner. The stewpan filled with thick linnet oil boiled, forming a greenish foam. I baked pancakes out of flour mixed with water. The smoke was dreadful, but my patient boy lay waiting for the milk, which my adopted sister had gone to get from our neighbours.

The door opened and a soldier appeared, his cap pushed back on his head and a cigarette between his teeth. He walked into the room slowly.

"I've come on some business, comrade," he explained, sitting down without being asked. "My pal walks out with your sister. I've made up my mind to do so with you so I have come to fetch you! I'll treat you to some lemonade on the boulevard. We can have something else as well. Agreed?"

I was nonplussed. By a refusal I risked hurting his feelings and rousing a desire for

vengeance. But it was just as impossible to agree to his offer.

Trying to smile affably, I expressed my regret at being unable to accept his tempting offer because of the sick child. He would not hear of it.

"Fiddlesticks, we'll go when he is asleep."

But I continued to explain to him the hopelessness of the situation.

"You know very well I never go anywhere at night and cannot do so with you any more than with another."

He grew sullen, threw away his cigarette and standing in the door, growled:

"It's proud that you are, that's what it is. Your sister's far better than you and knows how to treat us."

He was surely right and I did not try to justify myself.

Two weeks later he came once more, looking very important, carrying a portfolio under his arm.

"You can congratulate me, comrade," he

said, turning to me as he stood on the threshold, not even entering the room. "And also, be sorry for your refusal. I've got a high promotion now."

I expressed my pleasure and asked what his new position was.

"Inspector of Prostitution. A responsible position."

I did not understand at once and thought that I had heard wrong, but he repeated his words.

"Of course, of course," I managed to answer, "all my congratulations."

The high post proved, however, to be full of temptations. The unfortunate man did not withstand them. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to be shot. The military rule had no mercy either for the "enemy" or for their own people when a man was found guilty.

From those same soldiers and officers in training, I heard that Esperanto lectures were to be started in their school. There were no

teachers to be had for them. I decided to offer my services. I had no knowledge of Esperanto but thought I might get a manual and learn it with my pupils. My action was not an honourable one, but the stomach silenced all ethics.

I was accepted. A military ration was given to me and I was told to come and inquire about the number of pupils. In order to begin the lectures, the groups had to number fifteen pupils. Two months passed. The number never exceeded seven, but I continued to receive my supplies. Finally the school was transferred to another town and thus ended my pedagogic career. The certificate that I received, however, as a teacher of military courses, often proved useful to me in times to come.

So we lived on, with casual earnings, with the fruit that fell from the trees, with the exchange of a pillow-case or towel for a pound of meat or a loaf of bread.

The question of clothes became more and

more a problem. My only pair of shoes had fallen to pieces and I walked barefoot. This was possible in the suburbs where we lived, but the scalding pavement was a torture to the feet in town. For a joke, I was surnamed by my friends: Isadora Duncan. However, it did not trouble me much in the warm weather, but I thought with growing terror of the winter.

Not everybody, however, was in such straits as I was. The local people, who lived in their houses, had conserved their possessions. A lot had been confiscated, but still a part remained. Peasants readily bought up furniture and brought enough flour and lard for a month in exchange for a glass cupboard.

I had had exceptionally bad luck with all the moving about I had done. That had deprived me of most of my possessions.

All the people who had come to the Crimea from central Russia with the intention of remaining here through the summer months and those who had not left for abroad, were in the

same desperate situation—without a profession, without any knowledge of work, and with the ineradicable stain of former social position.

The secret rumours concerning the expected appearance of foreign warships continued. From the very first day of the Bolshevist occupation, everybody had clung to the hope for help from abroad. We watched the sea which was now almost empty; each club of smoke roused indescribable emotion. Prophecies were circulating about the coming downfall of the Bolshevists.

Meanwhile a new calamity was approaching. The summer 1921 had been torrid, droughty. No rain fell. The crops had been ruined.

Famine approached.

8. FAMINE

THE military school having been transferred to Simferopol, the gardener's small house which the soldiers had occupied was untenanted. It stood on a foundation and was not as damp as our little hut.

I decided to move into it. The place was dirty and neglected. It needed whitewashing. I had no money and was obliged to undertake it myself, as my maid, after her mother's death, was called back home to Poland and I remained alone. Life became still harder for me, of course. Every time I went away from the house in search of food I was obliged to leave the helpless, bedridden boy all alone. The whitewashing was not a success. My strength ebbed away every day from poor

nourishment and it cost me a great effort to handle the stick with the brush attached to it. My back, my arms, my neck ached cruelly.

When I had finished my work, however, I noticed that the floor had become almost as white as the ceiling from the chalk that was streaming down. Without hesitating, I brought two pails of water and splashing them out commenced washing the floor with a rag. My hands began to hurt horribly and glancing at them I saw to my consternation that there were deep abrasions on the fingers and on the palms. The lime had scalded and corroded my hands to the bone.

The pain grew worse and worse. I moaned, tears flowed from my eyes, I was at a loss to know what to do. There was no one to put on a bandage; somehow or other I wrapped my hands in some rags. But how was I to cook the dinner, wash, fetch water? Every touch was an indescribable torture. How I cursed my thoughtlessness!

In the evening the kind watchwoman of the

neighbouring villa came to see me and I confided my misfortune to her. She examined my hand, said that this often happened in the village with young, inexperienced women and that the best cure for it was to dissolve some lye in hot water and begin to wash clothes.

I followed her advice and pressing my teeth together, washed clothes in this painful solution as long as I could bear. This drastic cure disinfected my wounds and saved me from blood-poisoning.

Gradually I lost all semblance of a human being, at least so it seemed to me. My frock was covered with speckled patches, my underclothes had to be washed at night for the lack of a change. A torn woollen shawl was tied round my head; my legs were wrapped in nondescript rags.

A sealskin coat remained of former glories and served at night as a blanket, for that had been sold. Finally I had to part with it as well. Nobody wanted the last emerald earrings. The peasants, who were the only people

supplied with money and food, attached no value to them.

I exchanged my fur coat for twenty pounds of dried beans, as much groats, and some linnet oil. I had to accept besides ten pounds of horse meat. Thus we were provided with food for a time.

The market was opened once more, but it was but a source of cruel temptation for us beggars. A pound of bread cost fifty thousand, a pound of groats seventy-five thousand roubles. Altogether private buyers were so scarce that a few stalls were more than sufficient to serve the needs of customers.

Once after a happy bargain of clothes for flour and some fish, my friend decided to give a magnificent meal for the benefit of her nearest friends and her family. A fish pie was composed, of course without butter and eggs, but with a strong layer of paste and much filling. The guests fairly could not await the hour fixed. The pie was still hot and not yet quite well done, when already we started to

divide it in portions, with an accuracy of justice that even considered the last particle of an inch. The blinds were carefully closed in order to avoid our being watched from the street. Everybody, after having taken his piece, comfortably installed himself somewhere. Complete silence fell upon the room. The constant lack of food had created avidity. We hurried and swallowed as if we feared that whoever would have finished first would try to take away the piece of the one who had lagged behind. We all finished at the same time. Peacefully everybody now rolled his cigarette in a piece of newspaper. An old and starved man, formerly the proprietor of many houses in the Crimea, and from whom I had once bought my villa, interrupted the silence and, his face illuminated, said:

"Marvellous, I have become human again and I have got back my courage. Now they can lead me to my execution, I would go with a firm step."

The poor man did not end his life in so heroic

a manner. The feast of the fish pie did not repeat itself. And some months later, he was found in his room dead from starvation.

When bread disappeared from the market I felt that this was really the end. I repeat that I felt it, for I could neither reason nor calculate any more. I had become transformed into a beast troubled only by the idea of nourishing the child and myself. I clung to life with the same kind of savage instinct, seeing nothing ahead and had no other wish than to drag on further this burden called existence. The last quarter of a loaf, acquired after three hours' waiting in the market, was wrenched from me in the street by a crowd of hungry Gipsies. That bit of bread I had intended to bring home and, cutting it up in small pieces, eat it with the boiled water which had for a long time taken the place of tea.

I was so hungry myself that the hunger of others did not move me and the behaviour of the Gipsies filled my heart with bitter anger.

But things were not so bad while the famished people still had the strength to wrench food from their fellow sufferers. It became worse when, spent and exhausted, they sprawled in the street and nothing but cries and moans came from their living skeletons. The first victims were Tartars and Gipsies. Whole quarters were devastated. Mothers, surrounded by children with bloated stomachs, lay on the pavement under doorways, on the squares. They stretched out their hands in one last effort, but who could come to their help?

The rich were afraid to share, uncertain how long they themselves would last; the poor man, if he still stood on his feet, turned away from the picture of what awaited him another day.

As one approached the town coming from the suburbs, one could hear from afar the wails of the hungry and of the dying.

We even got used to this.

Without hesitating one stepped across

corpses, barely able to stand oneself. I lost fifty pounds, but did not swell out. Scurvy loosened my teeth, blood trickled from the gums.

We fed on liquid food, without sugar or fats. A soup with the scum of horse meat and a spoon of groats formed our dinner and was warmed for supper.

The desire to chew overcame one. Just to chew, bite at something hard. We ate the remains of sunflower seeds left over from oil factories. That had served before as fuel in the Crimea, but it was expensive and we were unable to afford it.

Beside the food there were many other obsessions and it cost one many cruel efforts to overcome them.

The winter was a severe one, with deep snow, quite unusual for the Crimea. Fuel had to be found. The boughs had curled up completely, and burnt out rapidly, leaving no warmth. In spite of impending punishments, people tore

up villas, houses, took floors to pieces, burnt window-frames, doors, furniture, books.

I, too, had to begin doing this.

Already in the autumn, I had found one day a gardener's saw in the glasshouse next door. I used it to cut off branches. Now, arming myself with it, I stealthily made my way at night to the half-finished villa in our garden. I searched for light boards such as my strength would allow me to handle and set to work.

The saw screeched slowly, I often stopped and listened to hear if anybody was coming. Only the trees in the garden rustled and I continued my task.

I brought the first booty home safely, broke it up in chips and stored it away. Every third or fourth day, however, the nightly sallies had to be repeated. My head often reeled, but despair gave birth to inhuman strength. I did not want to surrender and decided to fight until the end.

It was hard to get along without a coat. My

shabby woollen dress did not protect me from the cold even in the house. I had no material with which to make another one. I unripped a pillow, made a vest out of the cover, stuffed and quilted it with down. I did not succeed in my attempts to cut out the sleeves, and besides there was not enough cloth for them. I had to do without. Thus attired I made my daily journey to fetch water with two pails.

The nearest water-pump was two blocks off. I sunk into the snow-drifts and while the water poured into my buckets, the rags that were wrapped around my legs froze to ice. My hands and feet were frozen, of course. They were swollen and ached horribly.

When I was obliged to go to town, I ran to my friends who still kept one "grandmother's cloak" for the use of a family of five people. On my return I left it again at their house and ran home with nothing on but my dress.

The soot that came from the stove had been absorbed into our necks, faces and hands.

Soap was a luxury and we washed in plain water, using the same towel that served for saucepans as well.

One could feel the foundations of character weaken under all these difficulties. It was not a rare thing for even us mothers to secretly take away bread from our children when suffering from hunger seemed to become intolerable. I remember one of my friends having confessed to me that once in a while she would take little crumbs of bread out of a drawer where her daughter kept remnants of her ration. I know myself that one day at the market I had, by means of exchange, gotten a piece of bread which I intended to take home for my son. But I devoured it on the spot. It is true I excused myself at once to myself. The bread was made half of straw. It might have done harm to the child. But these explanations showed to me already that my conscience was not all it should be.

It seemed that we had reached the supreme limit. That one could not sink any deeper.

Even the ticking of the mattress had been ripped off and sold and we slept in our clothes.

The suburbs grew more and more empty every day. People died, or moved to town, faithful to the proverb: "In a crowd, death is a treat."

The fear of thieves and brigands also drove them away. Strangely enough I, a coward at heart, seemed to have forgotten what fear was.

There was nothing to steal from me and death, anyhow, was right there by one's side. I continued living without locks or bolts. The slight, small hook at the front-door was more a protection from the squalls of wind than from the pressure of a human hand.

Once a storm broke. The night was dark, the trees cracked, the shutters clapped, the sea rolled in menacing waves.

The smoking wick shone dully, the child was asleep. I lit the stove, put on the tea-pot, and, waiting until it should boil, tried to

mend one of the numerous holes in our miserable rags.

My thoughts wandered. I could not concentrate my mind because of hunger and weakness. It shifted from one thing to the other and my heart ached not only for the boy and myself, but also for the elder son of whose fate I was in ignorance.

A little while before, a friend, no better off than I was, had tried to persuade me that, considering the hopelessness of our situation, the only way out for us was suicide. The plan was to sell out our last possessions, have a last meal together, and, closing the chimney, light the stove, then lie down to die in the poisonous fumes.

I could not make a decision and put off my reply more than once. There was consolation in this plan to make an end. But there was also consolation in the idea that something might turn up which would change everything for the better. Now I was again thinking it over. It was tempting to put an end to all

suffering, but dared I sacrifice the life of the child? Besides, the hope still lingered that in spite of everything one would manage to get out of this and stand once more on one's feet. At the same time I reflected that the last crumbs received for the coat were gone, tomorrow something had to be done about it—but where and how?

The water boiled. In small sips I drank down all my inner bitterness and smoked the cheap tobacco, wrapped in bits of newspaper.

One always found some one to share tobacco with. It was a safeguard that silenced hunger.

Suddenly I pricked up my ears, hearing steps and whispering at the window. My heart beat wildly. Fear still lived in me.

A moment later somebody knocked at the door. I grew numb. There was no escape; I was alone and the hook could not protect me. The knock was repeated. I remained silent.

"Open, woman, or it will be worse for you. We'll break the door."

It was better to open of one's own free will.

Three men with revolvers came in. One of them, closing the door, stood with his back to it, barring the exit.

"What do you want?" I asked, trying to suppress the trembling of my voice.

"We've just come to see what you are up to, and what you've got in here. What were you doing now before we came? Eating, I'll bet."

"I have nothing to eat and I have prepared no dinner to-day. You can see for yourselves. If you don't believe it, look," I replied, removing the lid of the saucepan. They hunted everywhere, examined the room and began whispering. I awaited their decision. One of them tried to open the door into the next room.

"Please do not go there, my child is asleep. You will frighten him. There is nothing in that room, I swear!"

He drew back. "Well, you're sure to have tobacco, anyway," he said more amiably.

"Yes, tobacco is there. Smoke, please."

All four of us sat at the table, rolling the cigarettes. My hands trembled slightly.

They smoked in silence and spat on the floor. Then, rising, they whispered again, examined the corners and left me at last, calling back from the threshold:

"Not only is there nothing to take from you, but it seems to us that a pair of breeches would be useful."

I sat for a long time after they had left, afraid to move. No, decidedly, I was not as brave as I imagined myself to be.

Next morning the news came of burglary and murder in the neighbouring block. It surely was the work of my nocturnal guests.

Poverty has its advantages.

9. HOPE

CHRISTMAS EVE of 1921 was nearing. For two days running we would eat nothing, then a friend would manage to get hold of some food and share it with us. The kind woman who took care of the neighbouring villa, brought a glass of milk for the child.

Generosity often prevails among people who themselves are suffering and in need. To my mind comes especially a cold and gloomy winter day. For three days in succession I had been going to the market hoping to sell some little things I still possessed. But in vain. Nobody wanted them. And each time when coming home I was met by the questioning and hungry glances of my child. Again I went out on my errand. I had lost all

energy, and perhaps for the first time in my life I realised fully my hopelessness and loneliness. On a street corner I stopped and, as in a daze, looked blankly at the passers-by. Tears streamed down my cheeks which I did not wipe off. Only one thought kept coming and going in my mind: where shall I go and how can I again return home without bread?

"What is the matter with you?" I heard a voice asking me all of a sudden. I had not noticed that a man was standing in front of me, watching me. Spontaneously I told him about my worries, and held out the things to him which I had clutched in my hands. He opened his pocket-book in reply, from which he took a piece of bread. He gave it to me, saying: "Here, take this. That is my service ration. But at home I still have some more. You will give it back to me another time." And with this he left me.

Such little human touches remain unforgettable and helped us to live on.

I continued to search for work but even had

I found something to do I would have been unable to accept the job for want of clothing.

One day, during one of those attempts, the wife of a former military procurator with whom I had been slightly acquainted came up to me. Drawing me aside and looking round to see if anyone was listening, she explained that a family she knew was intending to leave secretly for Constantinople at night on a sailing-boat. They were to start from a remote part of the town before the rising of the moon, while it was still dark. They needed a shelter where they might collect their belongings and await with their child the moment of sailing.

My small house, in its deserted spot by the sea, answered to their wants. They only needed my consent.

It was a risky step to take. If the plan became known, the same punishment threatened me for hiding them: execution. The thought, too, flashed across my mind: what if the woman has been sent to me in order to draw me into some trap? For that type of making a living

had become rather usual of late. Unable to stand the hardships of life, people secured their existence by working for the *Tcheka* (later G.P.U.).

But I consented, nevertheless. The opportunity to be of use to somebody was too tempting when one felt so useless to oneself. It gave me a kind of satisfaction to feel I was needed by somebody although my life seemed devoid of meaning.

Toward evening, bundles and suit-cases were brought to me and with the coming of darkness the travellers themselves arrived. I put one room at their disposal, but, unfortunately, could treat them only to boiled water.

Having sold their apartment and all their possessions, my guests had collected provisions for the journey. One sack was opened that night, and we were invited to partake of the feast. We ate as we had not done for a long time.

The hour for sailing was nearing. We went out into the garden listening, waiting for the

whistle that was to serve as the signal. Nothing, however, was to be heard and the thick darkness made it impossible to distinguish anything on the water. My guests began to feel troubled and anxious.

The journey on a plain fisherman's sailing-boat was dangerous, but lately several parties of runaways had accomplished it successfully. Their example gave others hope. One needed only courage and the necessary means to pay the fishermen and supply oneself with bread; but how few could afford that!

The moon rose. The hope of leaving on that night vanished. Having parted with their flat they had nowhere to go. I suggested that they stay with me and wait for the morrow.

But the next night again passed in vain expectation. The sailing-boat did not come—the fisherman had betrayed them.

We started living together. In gratitude for our shelter they fed us and I thanked Providence and them for the unexpected support.

Thus spring went by. Hunger continued to play havoc with people. An epidemic of typhus broke out. Death from starvation had a different appearance in every case. Some people swelled out like barrels, particularly their legs and stomach, the hands dangling, and the head, with its sunken eyes and large mouth, seemed disproportionately small. The children, with deep wrinkles on their blue faces, and protruding teeth, produced a specially ghastly impression. Some died of sores that spread all over the body, others simply grew weak and fell in the streets.

There were not enough coffins to be had. The corpses were gathered and loaded one upon the other on the carts. The hands and feet dangled in a ghastly manner. They were buried in a common grave.

The deserted houses of the suburbs were sometimes burnt down with corpses inside of them.

Cats and dogs were all eaten up long ago. As soon as grass began to grow, it was gath-

ered and eaten. Having now sufficient food, thanks to my lodgers, I began to examine my surroundings with more deliberation.

One picture is engraved on my memory and stirred me deeply. A woman came my way. Her feet barely supporting her, she groped with one hand along the walls of the houses, seeking for something to lean upon; with the other, she pushed along a stick at the end of which a wheel had been adjusted. A sack of strange shape, attached at one end to the wheel, at the other to the top of the stick, attracted my attention. Presuming that the woman carried in this way the food she might be able to gather, and seeing how weak she was, I offered to help.

She shook her head hopelessly.

"It's my son I'm burying. Here is the head; over there, by the wheel, the legs. He's my last. I want to bury him myself. I've no more strength. I'm left all alone. The wheelbarrow's gone for heating, so I had to do it in this way."

And she continued on her way.

I stood and watched her go. Did she get anywhere? Did she manage to bury her son, or was she buried with him?

My lodgers began to make new plans for running away. Solitude and despair threatened me once more. They tried to persuade me to join them and offered to pay for the passage. But one had to take a supply of provisions, and I possessed nothing and did not wish to be a burden to them.

By a mere chance, a buyer turned up for my earrings. He offered me ten gold roubles, a sack of flour and other food. I agreed. To run away seemed the only solution. We risked death at sea on the sailing-boat, but there was a hope of landing, whereas to remain meant death from starvation. I baked some pancakes, allowed my boy to leave his bed and began gradually to teach him to walk again.

This time we were to start from Sebastopol. On account of the secrecy that surrounded the

sailing, some of the passengers had to remain on the spot to watch, unseen, the preparations of the fisherman.

I was to be sent for at the last moment. The necessity to be nearer to the station or landing-place forced me to move into the town. The one bed that I brought with me became the eighth in the room of a friend. I slept on it with the boy. This bed and the sack with pancakes composed all my property. There we waited.

No news came from Sebastopol. The cakes grew mouldy, they had to be eaten. I did not know what to do. I was happy to be among friends, but we lived like herrings in a barrel on the money procured from selling home-made soap. This had to pay for our existence.

At that time the Crimean Government began to open food-kitchens for the hungry. They received gratuitously a plate of fish broth and an eighth of a pound of bread. Lines of children with tin mugs stood at the doors of

these institutions and greedily gulped down on the spot the food received.

Rumours were circulated that foreign organisations were soon to arrive which would feed the hungering population on cocoa and white bread. This seemed so unreal that one put no faith in it.

I find it hard to explain the sudden appearance of wealth in the town. Lenin's speech on the N.E.P. had not reached us and we wondered through what dark combinations in this reign of hunger and death had these people come by such possessions. The result of the "equality" born in blood was that some fed on cream and butter, others on grass.

Again commerce began to flourish. The deeds of requisitioned houses and land were secretly bought and sold. Later on, modest shops selling second-hand goods on commission began to open. A certain demand arose for dressmakers. At first timidly, then more boldly, everybody began to trade.

I had lost all hope of leaving and began to

be almost afraid of the expected summons, when the news came of the arrest in Sebastopol of all who were preparing to flee. This time the reason for the failure was treachery. Someone had been bribed to hand over a list of those sailing to the *Tcheka.* All were imprisoned. Luckily for me I had been entered as the sister of my lodger, with no mention of my name.

Again chance had come to my aid.

I began to work in a newly opened shop as embroideress. The wives of the new capitalists wished to wear extravagantly ornamented dresses. This was to my advantage. My own frock, however, refused to serve me any longer. I had to receive my clients sitting down to hide the holes in it. I put money aside to buy a cambric frock and finally the happy moment came in August when I was able to change and even purchase high cloth shoes which concealed the lack of stockings.

That dear little blue frock! It served as a

straw by means of which I managed to pull myself out of the dreary, hopeless existence I had been leading.

This is what happened.

The tales of the foreigners with bread became more and more insistent, they were expected from one day to the next, but each person, desirous of working for them, concealed from the other all details.

Cleanly dressed and shod I began to go about in the streets more freely and one day, passing by the hotel, I noticed new faces, which had little in common with our shabby inhabitants. The thought flashed across my mind:

"Here they are, the legendary foreigners with cocoa and sugar. I must try my luck." And I went in, boldly. The first person I addressed was an American. Hearing that I was trying to find work, he courteously offered to introduce me to the director. A kind-looking man with grey hair came up to me. It was Father Walsh, the Head of the Catholic

Mission sent by the Pope to help the starving people.

It was a joy to watch these healthy, rosy faces, to see the stuff of which their suits were made, the dazzling whiteness of their collars and their solid shoes. We looked at each other. My astonishment was reflected in his eyes. I saw their surprise, too. But his surprise was the result of my exhausted appearance, my transparent hands and my neat poverty.

We sat down. I explained that I was in search of work. He wrote down my answers in a notebook. I was willing to do anything, but I had to admit my complete lack of experience in the functions of a secretary. I had never done work of that kind before. He promised, however, to keep me in mind, in spite of the numerous applications, and kindly took leave of me.

During the conversation, I felt the gaze of a small dark man of Jewish appearance sitting in a corner fixed upon me so intently that it forced me to turn in his direction several times.

As I left the house, full of hope, he followed me with a long glance over his spectacles.

Several days passed. The foreigners did not summon me. I did not wish to seem intrusive by repeating my request, on the other hand I feared that if I did not make an appearance, I might be forgotten.

Passing by the hotel in a casual way one day, I noticed the man with the spectacles sitting on a bench. He came up to me and asked whether I had not been here several days ago to inquire about work. I replied that I had.

"Can I be of any use to you, and where could we talk it over?"

I suggested that we should sit down on the bench near the hotel.

He introduced himself as the Representative of the Soviet Government attached to Foreign Organisations.

"A Communist, that means," I thought to myself, and was on my guard.

"All the appointments go through me," he explained, "and I am the person you should

have applied to. Have you served before?"

I admitted that I had not and that the only thing I knew was languages.

"This makes it more difficult, of course." He grew thoughtful. "However, we will write down your name."

A certain anxiety overcame me. That unfortunate name might spoil everything. I hesitated, then resolved to introduce myself.

He jumped to his feet.

"Is it really you? I beg your pardon, but I have been searching for you for a long time. My daughter, you see, was a pupil in your kindergarten, and she has begged me to look you up and help you in these hard times. My efforts were all in vain. I thought you had emigrated and all of a sudden, this coincidence! You have changed greatly, but when you came into the hotel, I thought there was something familiar about your appearance. Do not let us lose any time. Write your application—to-morrow you will be received. I shall recommend you. I know that you have

worked since the revolution, and very efficiently, too. I am certain you will not betray the government."

I could not believe my ears, but did not wait to be begged. I thanked him from all my heart and in due time, indeed, I was received by Father Walsh and was given the position of secretary.

10. THE MISSION

A NEW life began. The first steps, however, were not easy. Beside the fear of not being able to hold my position and all the anxieties connected with it, we were still hungry. In coming to the Crimea, the foreigners were naturally prepared to find misery in abundance. But they could not realise the extent of the wretchedness around them in all its details. And so it happened that foodstuffs as well as salaries were to be distributed only at the end of the month's employment. How to live until then? Curiously enough we did not dare to explain our situation to the directors. What would they think of us if we made demands at the very beginning of our work?

One had to find a way to earn something in

the meantime. I offered my services in a club called the *First of May* to take charge of the refreshment stand, bake cakes, pour out the tea. After working from eight to five, I came home and started to knead dough made with the flour that had been furnished, and having fed and put the child to bed, I went at ten o'clock to the club with a basket of cakes. There I put the samovar to boil and till dawn attended soldiers and officers and party workmen. I couldn't get used to the sound of the spoon against the glass which meant that I was being called and at first I irritated everybody with my clumsiness. How often did I want to tell my kind chiefs in the Mission that instead of the chocolate they sent to my son, we would have preferred a loaf of bread! False pride prevented me.

At last the long desired end of the month approached. We got the A.R.A. parcel consisting of flour, rice, fats, cocoa, sugar and condensed milk. The salary was a paltry one, for it had been stipulated by the Soviet Govern-

ment, but the happiness of the staff knew no bounds.

I gave up my work in the club.

During that month the Mission had organised food kitchens where each had the right to receive a substantial meal. Only the last formalities remained to be gone through with before the work of feeding twenty-four thousand people in the town and district would be in full swing. Here a new ordeal awaited me.

The Committee of the Board of Trade which surveyed the distribution of work dismissed me as an "unproletarian element." The director, Father Walsh, took my part, insisting on his right to choose his staff at his own will, particularly if recommended from the Soviet side. The Heads of the Crimean Republic refused to give in, backing the committee.

Again an abyss opened in front of me. The work in the Mission had been my salvation, the only means of getting on my feet again.

I had been compromised, in the opinion of the Soviet authorities, by my attempt to work with foreigners and this could inflict upon me many hardships, arrest included, as soon as I was no longer under the protection of the Mission. With a faltering heart I watched the negotiations and correspondence.

Achieving no success with the local authorities, Father Walsh went to Moscow, warning them that if they did not accede to his demands, the food-kitchen would not be opened and the Mission would transfer its activities to another district.

The question was, of course, one of principle, not involving me only. In case of failure, however, I would have had to pay for it with my skin.

The dreary days of waiting dragged on. The work dropped from my hands, my mind was unable to grasp anything. At last came the wire with the directions to open the food-kitchens, which meant at the same time a favourable decision for me.

From the Catholics of all the world large sums of money flowed to the Pope for our relief. The Mission bought food supplies. The contributions, especially for children, were so large that the organisation spread over all the districts touched by the calamity.

Dr. Walsh remained in Moscow, where he organised a Central Department. Orders were passed from there to all the other departments of the Caucasus, Volga, etc. The members of the Mission consisted of Italians, Spaniards, Americans, Germans, Czechoslovakians. Our Crimean department was directed by Germans under the guidance of E. Gehrmann.

Only later did I learn that they were all Catholic priests or monks. They called themselves "professors" and "doctors" and wore plain clothes. This had been agreed upon with the Soviet Government. They lived modestly and did not emphasise their dignity.

The work was interesting and fruitful. The children improved on sight, their cheeks acquired colour, filled out. It was a joy to wit-

ness their happiness and gratitude. A special commission verified the applications, visiting the houses. Relief was offered to each with no distinction of nationality, religion, class or political platform.

It was said at first that the object of the Mission was to increase the membership of the Catholic Church but that was not true. During the two years of my work with them I never saw a sign of such propaganda.

In the capacity of secretary I had constantly to act as interpreter during the conversations between my director and the local authorities. This was a hard task owing to perpetual misunderstandings. My Russian translations gave the impression that the disapprovals and requests of Mr. Gehrmann originated personally from me.

The President of the *Ispolkom* (Executive Committee) was Lboff, a plain workman whose knowledge and education consisted chiefly in a flourishing signature. He openly expressed his

disapproval of my taking part in negotiations and this became specially obvious in a discussion which arose concerning the insurance of employés.

An endless correspondence on the subject led to no decision. The Mission demanded that people in their employment should be insured according to the general laws of the Labour code; the local authorities refused to consider us as Soviet labour, although our salaries were paid by the Government.

At last the business reached the stage which necessitated a personal interview. I, as usual, accompanied the director.

"Tell Mr. Gehrmann," Lboff turned to me across the writing-table, "that we are not interested in the insurance of people in his employ. They are chiefly of non-proletarian origin, non-party people and altogether an undesirable element for us. Tell him too that we see no need of insuring such as you, for instance. What are you to us after all? Dust and litter. You may fall ill and die—what

matters it to us? What use can we make of you? Why, you are alive only because all 'princes and their like' were not hanged in time."

The blood rushed to my face as he was talking.

"Allow me, before I translate your words to the director, to answer you," I said. "From your point of view, there may be something in what you say but I have a right to demand the means of existence. I did not run away from the Soviet Government. I have lived through these times working hard. I am ready to work on further, believing that the Communist motto, 'He who does not work, does not eat,' concerns everybody and really means what it says. Its converse is then true: that he who works may eat. You have asked General Slashcheff to work in the Red Army, haven't you? That shows that you do need people of other than proletarian origin."

"Well, yes, Slashcheff, but that is only a temporary evil. Soon we will have no use for him,

either. Anyway, we'll talk about it with you another time. Now go on translating."

Owing to the self-control and tact of the director of the Mission, the conversation ended peacefully with a promise to meet the requests halfway.

These disagreements disturbed me greatly. For the time being the Mission was a support, but its work in Russia was temporary. If I must endure later the persecution of those in my own Government, the future looked dark, indeed.

As an employé of the Mission, I had become a member of the Soviet-Trade Unions automatically. They are an official institution giving many rights and advantages to their members. One day, I discovered my name on the list of those who had been excluded, the explanation being merely: "useless ballast." This meant that in future I never could work in any Soviet institution, not even in a factory. I was relegated to those who were considered to be

merely tolerated in Soviet Russia, and even as a "dangerous element." Was I a capitalist in any sense any more? Had I not been for years a worker like everybody else?

I felt myself to be under constant surveillance but believed I had nothing to fear since I had firmly resolved to remain loyal to the authorities in power. Often unknown individuals, sent to test me, told me in secret that they were white officers, pursued by the Bolshevists, and that they had turned to me, knowing my sympathies. I listened calmly and invariably gave them the same advice: to send in an application addressed to the Mission, but to leave out any statements as to their political background, for that would bring a refusal.

I, personally, always filled in the forms truthfully, whereas many others, afraid to admit their former nobility, put themselves down as plain citizens, or ascribed to their parents the profession of village teachers, dressmakers, etc. All this usually became known in the long run and led to many miseries.

The form consisted of an endless row of questions, repeated on every possible occasion, and evidently designed to make one betray oneself. We had to write down the class to which we belonged (although classes were supposed to have been abolished); we had to declare the former occupation of our father and mother and sometimes give information on more distant relations and acquaintances with their addresses. There followed such clauses as:

Do you acknowledge the Soviet Government?

What did you do in 1905 (the first Russian Revolution)?

What do you think of the French Revolution, etc.?

One had to answer in commonplaces:

I acknowledge the existing Government.

I was in school in 1905.

I studied the French Revolution superficially.

Who would have entertained the insane idea, equivalent to suicide, of refusing to acknowledge the Soviet Government?

I was never arrested and never summoned by the *Tcheka* (G.P.U.) for interrogation. Many of our employés passed through this ordeal, however, and I knew from reliable sources, that I was the centre of most of the discussions. My letters as well as those of everybody else came with evident signs of having been opened. One day I dared to take some aggressive action about this. I dropped a letter in the post-box without sticking the envelope. The next day, I received a notice from the authorities concerned that my intention had been quite understood and I was warned against any further liberties of the sort.

The Crimea was at that time an independent republic, headed by President Haven. He lived in Simferopol in winter and occupied a charming villa in Eupatoria in summer. He was a large, stout man, walked on crutches and suffered from bone tuberculosis. He received

his visitors in bed or in the garden, warming his bare, outstretched leg in the sun. This was a most unpleasant spectacle, as his leg was covered with sores. But he was a man of great intelligence, a former political refugee, and it was better to deal with him than with such narrow and intolerant people as the others were.

At the banquets, arranged in honour of the Mission, I had to assist as interpreter. I remember particularly one supper, where all the local authorities were gathered, such as the President of the Executive Committee, the *Upolbit* (Russian abbreviation of Ministry in charge of the improvement of child life), the *Upolpred* (Department controlling foreign charitable organisations), President of the Board of Trade, of the Unions, Director of the *Raikurupr* (Regional health resorts direction), etc. President Haven was represented by his wife because of his illness, and she and I were the only women present.

At the beginning all was very dignified. Speeches were made. I translated them.

Everybody ate and drank. But towards the end of the dinner, the chairs drew closer to each other, the speeches became more incoherent. Soon the place was in an uproar, which did not prevent the representative of the Tartar population from snoring loudly over on the sofa where he had stretched himself out.

The foreigners watched this "picture of life" with great interest. I began to feel uneasy but I could not leave. It would have been considered as a criticism of the authorities.

My neighbour on the right first pricked me with a pin, then pricked himself, thus sealing with this unusual rite our unexpected friendship. The neighbour on the left obstinately insisted upon my joining the Bolshevists. Strange conversations were going on about love affairs between the races—Negroes, Chinese—about free love, and free offers were made as well. One of the men at the table made the mistake of raising his glass to the "ladies present," to which Madame Haven indignantly replied:

"There are no ladies here, there are only workingwomen—comrades."

The quiet, every-day life of the Mission was very soothing to me. I had trained myself to the work, the chiefs were very kind to us, and my companions were all nice people. It was difficult to make ends meet at home, but we were not hungry and our strength increased every day.

I got a room at the Mission. It was damp, it is true, but I was happy to be near my work. This solved the question of a coat until the material came from Rome. With time, the population was not only fed but clothed.

From a diary I kept at the time, one could detect that I was not always cheerful. For instance:

March the 7th, Friday. Days follow each other, dreary and monotonous. From ten to four as usual in the office. Then a short walk after dinner and mending at home. Every penny has to be taken account of. The market becomes an

obsession. The pay does not suffice for the food. I cannot feed on cocoa, condensed milk and rice any longer. I want meat, potatoes, cabbage.

8th, Saturday. To-day is the international feast of the workwomen. At two o'clock all women have to stop working and come out into the street. To what purpose? I have allowed myself an awful luxury, a lemon for forty copeks: at the present rate of exchange it is fourteen thousand roubles. My conscience pricks me.

10th, Monday. I feel depressed. Coming home I find—smoke, dampness, the child crying—enough to make anybody want to run away.

An incident. The chemist G. has poisoned himself. One surmises that the reason is a romantic one; besides this town is disturbed by the corpse of a woman found in a sack on a wheelbarrow.

All in this strain. Obviously I took up my diary at the sad moments of my life. There were, however, some cheerful ones. Human nature is made that way: if you have bread, you want meat, and having meat, you want to buy a sheet.

We had grown quite destitute and on receiv-

ing our salary did not know what to begin buying—a towel, or a pillow-case.

All interests except those of the Mission were non-existent. We never read a book. The papers came from Moscow twice a week in great bundles. Not having followed politics from the beginning I could not unravel its meaning.

The whole world seemed a myth, except the Crimea which was the beginning and the end of everything.

Our local Havens and Lboffs were to us Lenins and Trotskis. Every connection with relations and acquaintances in Petrograd had been broken off. Some had emigrated, some had died, the survivors had moved from their former lodgings.

I tried to absorb myself in my work. There was enough to do. I had all the correspondence on my hands, wrote weekly reports on current events, received visitors, gave instructions for the administration of districts. Having worked with the Mission from the beginning, I

was well acquainted with the organisation, and it had become an easy task for me.

The human attitude of those in authority roused the efforts and devotion of the staff. For so long we had been made to feel inferior, and now, in the office, human dignity returned. We forgot the misery of our homes as we sat in the intervals between work over a cup of tea, talking animatedly with the director.

The time went on swiftly, as it usually does in a monotonous life. Gradually we were dressed and shod. I decorated my room with sacks, which served as covers for the wooden stools. It was almost cosy to sit under the lamp-shade made out of the lining of a sugar sack, painted in rose. The supreme luxury was a small suit-case into which I folded the newly acquired things.

11. MOSCOW AGAIN

THE year 1924 set in.

The agreement between Rome and Moscow was coming to its end. There was talk of its prolongation, also of the Mission's departure from Russia. Father Walsh was summoned to America, the administration of the Central Moscow Department passed to Mr. Gehrmann. The work in the Crimea continued under the direction of his assistants.

I began to consider the advisability of moving to Moscow. I could have been transferred through the office, but this would have given me a salary for only a short time as one could well see that the activities of the Mission were drawing to an end. Besides, the lodging crisis in Moscow gave little hope of getting a room.

The lack of money complicated every plan.

A feeling of self-preservation prompted me to leave the Crimea at the departure of the Mission and I began to insist on being transferred. At the end of July, I was sent to Moscow on business but had firmly resolved not to return.

With three roubles in my pocket, a light suitcase and a child, I boarded the train. As I was sent as a courier, I had received from the Mission a Pullman ticket. Even in the worst times I had always, jocularly, told those who longed to go to Moscow or Petrograd, that I would only return there if I could do so in a Pullman. So it happened. But this grand programme was curtailed a little by the fact that we had to live on apples until we arrived in Moscow.

I was going to face once more a new life. My idea of the future was very vague. But ignorance in life is sometimes better than a clear vision of reality. I continued to hope.

Owing to a stroke of luck, I succeeded in finding a cousin in Moscow who sheltered me.

Soon after my arrival she went abroad, leaving me some of her furniture.

I went regularly to the office of the Mission in the morning, but began to look about for work in teaching and translating so that I might have a means of livelihood after the departure of the Mission.

I seemed to breathe a new life on my arrival in Moscow.

A new energy flowed in my veins, the people and life in general acquired a new interest. I began to read, to go to the theatre.

The mind seemed awake once more. Having brought down the walls of the Crimean prison, I saw in front of me an open horizon. It is true that I worked a lot, and sometimes beyond my strength, but the work did not have as its only aim the filling of the stomach. At any rate so it seemed to me, and I believed that having found my way out of the black despair of the years 1920-1921 I would reach with another effort solid ground.

I dug up my friends and acquaintances. We

sometimes came together and sat down merrily to a modest meal to which we all had contributed, around a teapot that supplanted the former samovar. Sometimes three generations lodged in one room. Over the front door hung in a bunch the names of the lodgers with the direction as to how to ring the bell. For instance: three bells, two long and one short, was for one group; or five bells, four long and one short, for another. If the rhythm was preserved, the right person opened the door.

It was not advisable to remove one's wraps in the anteroom. Some thoughtless guest of one's neighbours could easily carry away with him a strange fur coat. But in some flats full confidence reigned and the anteroom was ornamented not only with cases and trunks, but with a clothes hanger. The room itself was made the most of in every way. Screens, curtains, cupboards helped to separate it into sections. The table under a lowered lamp, drawn towards the window was called the dining-room; the sofa on which the guests used to sit

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as in a sitting-room was turned into a bed at night. Some achieved virtuosity and managed to bring order and cosiness on their famous "lifesquare"—that small space which was allotted as a maximum to every adult in Moscow. An enterprising couple succeeded in dancing a fox trot between the bed and the table. In the hours of rest and oblivion we made merry in the new surroundings, perhaps more heartily than we had ever done before.

The last stage in this life was my expulsion from my room.

A man in a leather coat and cap came to me quite unexpectedly one day, a portfolio under his arm and declared that he had the permission to occupy my room. At first I was surprised, then indignant.

"Please to vacate the room, comrade," he repeated, handing me the paper.

"It must be a misunderstanding," I said, turning to him and trying to speak calmly. "You can see that I live here, that I have a sick

child. What shall I do without a shelter?"

"That does not concern me. If you do not leave within twenty-four hours, I'll move in all the same and bring my bed. I'm leaving my suit-case anyway and will go and complain to the commandant."

I closed the door in his face and locked it. Soon the commandant of the house came with the same order. I declared that I would leave my room only after a tribunal's decision. Thus I postponed it for two weeks. I went to a lawyer. He did not take my case, explaining its hopelessness to me. Nothing remained but to choose the lesser of the two evils and beg the tribunal to accord me a delay of two weeks to search for lodgings.

The day came of my appearance before the tribunal. I was very anxious as I had to make a speech and was afraid that I would land on the prisoner's bench.

It proved not to be as terrible as I expected. The Communists of the house where I lived spoke fiercely, blaming me for my "bourgeois

spirit," typical, as they said, of a former landowner.

"They have all lived in such apartments long enough," one of them said, bubbling over with excitement. "It's time to move them into cellars and have workmen take their places. We demand an immediate expulsion of the non-proletarian element."

A former cab-driver presided in court, next to him sat a young girl in a scarlet shawl.

I was allowed to speak. In a few words I explained my position, and admitting the privileged right of the workman to the room I occupied, only begged for a fortnight's postponement of the eviction during which time I would find another room. The judges retired for discussion and soon returned acquiescing to my demand. My opponents hissed.

The Mission again rendered me an unforgettable service, realising my difficult position. It placed my son in a sanitarium for tubercular patients and paid for a tiny room on a ground floor for him.

Thus I succeeded in getting on my feet again, settling down in Moscow and setting up a modest household of my own. My lessons and translations brought me a considerable sum, and life became quite decently organised. This was in that short period before the decline of the New Economic Policy when one worked unmolested even though deprived of his political rights. Later, things were different. Toward the spring I married, acquired the nationality of my husband and thus emerged from the circle of dangers, threatening every Russian in his country.

The seven years I endured appear to me like a gate through which I passed, painfully, to a new and broader conception of life. Without taking any part in war or politics, I passed near the events which were making over the history of Russia, carrying on my shoulders, like thousands of others, the burden of cold, hunger and misery. What has been an experience for me, remains for many of my Russian sisters their daily life.

We belonged to that strange generation which in one existence has lived two ages. We speak of "our times" as separated from the present only by twelve years, but in reality they stand far beyond the limits of the century.

Brought up in past traditions which so little had prepared us for the sterner side of life, it was the struggle which taught us patience and self-reliance, and developed in us the energy which enabled us to overcome so many difficulties, although it was an energy frequently born of despair. We gladly undertook any kind of work. We never feared that we would be degraded by it.

From "muslin creatures" we became at least useful if not efficient. All the discipline of our education expressed itself in a discipline of life and in the great word: Patience.

It is through this Patience that many thousands of Russian women, bruised and battered by history, continue to perform unnoticed their deeds of quiet bravery.

THE END

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